Uprooted Writers • The Wild Child • Reagan's People

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

April 12, 1980 Price One Dollar

THE GREAT CARTER MYSTERY

BY ARTHUR SCHLESINGER JR.

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How does he do it?

Here is an administration in ruins. Here is a president who has nearly quadrupled the inflation rate at home, has produced the highest interest rates in American history, and now is deliberately steering the nation into a recession; abroad he has kicked away confidence among friends and foes alike in the sobriety, consistency, and reliability of American foreign policy. Six months ago he was nowhere in the polls. Today, barring a rebirth of sanity in the Democratic party, Jimmy Carter seems headed for renomination; and, barring repression of a death wish in the Republican party,

(continued on page 18)

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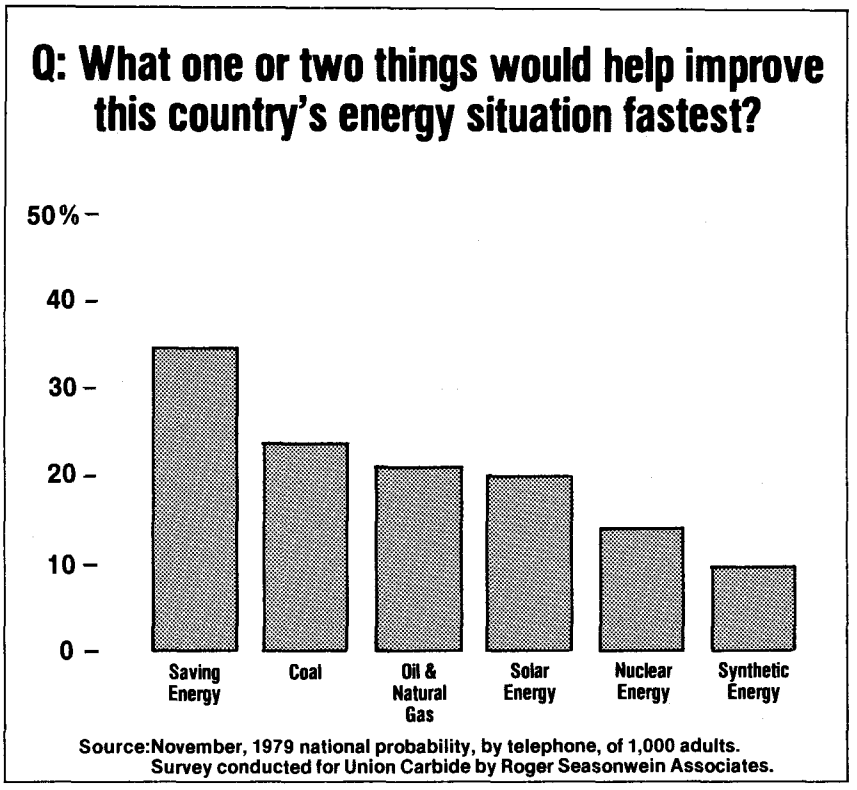

New survey ranks conservation as America's fastest energy option.

In a new public attitude study conducted for Union Carbide by Roger Seasonwein Associates, Americans ranked conservation as the fastest (chart above) and one of the most economical ways to improve the nation's energy situation. This finding takes on particular significance as the Congress shapes an energy program which relies heavily on developing new technologies to deliver substantial amounts of synthetic fuels in the 1990's.

Appropriate as this is in the long-term, many energy analysts are convinced — and the public now agrees — that a commitment to conservation would produce faster results. In addition to speed and economy, Americans rate conservation highly on its environmental advantage — second only to solar.

The survey also shows that 56 percent of American homeowners believe their homes are not as energy efficient as they could be, and a majority of these homeowners feel that they can't afford to make them more efficient. The public expresses strong support for government programs to help homeowners improve this situation, and also favors programs to help industry become more energy efficient.

In short, our survey reveals a large constituency for energy policies which exploit conservation's potential for fast results. The survey is available on request.

How to get a copy:

For a copy of this study, write "Conservation Study" Union Carbide Corporation Box TNR39, 270 Park Avenue, New York, New York 10017.

UNION CARBIDE

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TRB

from Washington ®
April 12, 1980

Those Sterling Hunts

For a few tense hours the other day it looked as though we were going to have a silver melt-down on Wall Street. It would have set off an economic chain reaction round the world. We came, I believe, within a hair of catastrophe with consequences that would have been incalculable. At home we have the overhang of inflation and all-time-high interest rates; abroad, we see half the Less Developed Countries so strapped that they may default on their debts. In this jittery situation the gamble of two of the world's richest men to corner the world silver market collapsed just as Jay Gould's attempt to corner the gold market collapsed, which precipitated the Panic of 1869.

Nelson Bunker Hunt and W. Herbert Hunt, sons of the late arch-conservative oil billionaire H. L. Hunt, began buying silver in 1974 when it sold for $3.27 an ounce. It was illegal to buy gold and they figured silver was just as good an inflation hedge because the world currently uses more silver each year than it produces. They acquired 30 million ounces of it in rights or bullion, and the price climbed to over $50, a neat little nest egg of $10 or $12 billion. They were joined in this by a group of Saudi sheiks and a mysterious correspondent in Brazil. Then the price cracked.

It wasn't the first time the Hunts had gone marauding. They love to gamble; so did their dad. He used to come to Washington to testify against communism and for the oil depletion allowance. Reporters grew fond of him as he sat at the back of committee rooms with his lunch in a paper bag, soft-spoken, gentle, and unassuming, with his car parked blocks away to save a 50-cent parking fee. He left five billion dollars when he died. Who was richer, he or J. Paul Getty? Getty said Hunt was. Hunt had a fifth-grade education; didn't drink or smoke; loved to gamble, but he gave up poker because he almost always won (it wasn't exciting enough); oil was more fun. Against new ideas he had a bulletproof mind.

In 1977 the Commodities Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) sued the Hunt brothers for buying up futures on 22.7 million bushels of soy beans—nearly a third of the expected market. Bunker Hunt has a passion for flamboyant business maneuvers like that. It recalls the days of Jay Gould and Jim Fisk and the "robber barons." Formerly the power of political conservativism in America was in the Eastern Establishment. Now it has moved to the Southwest—Goldwater and Reagan and John Tower and men like the Hunts.

The adventure in silver and the steady downward slide of the inflated commodity through February and March to below $10 on March 27 threatened an old-fashioned panic. There were calls for margin, the Hunts couldn't put up new collateral so old collateral was sold; there were rumors that the big Hunt-connected brokerage house, Bache Halsey Stuart, was in trouble; trading in its shares was suspended, and there were threats that other brokerage houses were affected with a general melt-down that would vaporize values throughout the capitalist world.

Washington contributed its special effects. Treasury secretary Miller came from a nine a.m. Cabinet meeting to prepare a speech for the National Press Club. Wall Street became alarmed: the Hunt brothers couldn't meet the $100-million margin call from the Bache group; Fed chairman Paul Volcker and treasury deputy secretary Carswell huddled with Miller; he was late for his speech, showed the strain, called "Face the Nation" at one point "Face the Naked."

Chairman James Stone of CFTC was summoned to Volcker's office, and found the others huddled there, including SEC chairman Harold Williams. Stock prices were plunging; fears had spread to the whole market; the Dow Jones industrial average was down 24 points at one time.

It is surprising how much the man in the street is isolated from these affairs, though Bunker Hunt did get on the cover of *Newsweek* last week. People didn't know how close they were to an economic Three Mile Island countdown. It seems unthinkable at a jittery time like this to allow two of the world's richest ment to gamble on a commodity that might have set dominoes falling round the world. The Hunts play Monopoly with real industries.

A century ago it would have been a Panic; it could have lingered a year, accentuating the recession we seem headed for anyway. What saved the day was instant communication. Bache had money to survive, and no other firms were involved, so the Hunts could spill a billion dollars on the commodity market floor and still have fresh funds. After a few hours the panic phase ended; stocks bounced back; even the price of silver recovered a dollar or two.

Now Congress talks about more regulations. H. L. Hunt wouldn't have liked that. I can see him now: tall with wispy hair, wearing a clip-on white bow tie, and giving a little smile from pursed lips. He denounced the United Nations; he thought Hoover's administration showed some socialistic tendencies. I have some commentaries he promoted on a program called *Life Line* over 345 stations, reaching six million people. On January 18, 1965, commentator Bob White reported the frightening news that Soviet Russia "now has 150 thermonuclear powered bombers" that can stay aloft 120 days. On December 6, 1966, commentator Melvin Munn told of another sinister plot: "the Communists have devised a master music plan especially for high school students to produce degrees of artificial neurosis and to prepare them for riot and ultimate revolution—riot and revolution to destroy our American form of government and the basic Christian principles governing our way of life." Yes sir, it was called rock 'n' roll and it's "part of the Communists' diabolical scheme to cause humans to revert to savagery."

Quite a family, these billionaire Hunts.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

April 12, 1980

Another Hand of Patience

American patience "is not endless," President Carter told a convention of the Building Trades unions on Tuesday, April 1. We were glad to hear it, as were the assembled hard hats, who stood and cheered. But after five months of torment by the Iranians, no limit on American patience is apparent. Last week's events were so typical of the general drift since last November that they are hard to keep straight in the mind. But what happened, in essence, was this. First, the White House promised a few utterly trivial new measures against Iran, advertising them as a new "get tough" stand. The next day, Carter decided to "defer" these actions in exchange for an insignificant change in the hostages' status, which was billed as a major concession by Iran. Then, as usual, the "deal" fell through, the US having once again exchanged something for nothing. As we write, the restraints on the hostages, and on American policy to free them, have not loosened a jot.

The proposed new American steps against Iran, as leaked by the White House to the *New York Times* and reported there on March 31, were: "an embargo on trade of all goods except food and medicine, the expulsion from the United States of Iranian diplomats, and a request to American allies to take limited economic steps against Iran and to withdraw their representatives from Tehran." And why not 20 lashes with a wet noodle? An embargo that doesn't include food is meaningless. An embargo that isn't joined in by our allies also is meaningless. "Limited economic steps" on their part clearly are envisaged not to include a cutoff of Iranian oil, and even these steps were only to be "requested." An embargo that works would be painful all around, but there's no point in doing it any other way. As for the expulsion of Iranian diplomats, Carter already announced this step months ago and yet they are still here. It's astonishing that we still have diplomatic relations with Iran at all. George Kennan has gone as far as suggesting a declaration of war. This simply would be a statement of diplomatic attitude; it would not require us to take military action. Certainly it would be a more accurate depiction of the proper American relationship with Iran at this point than a reduction in the size of the Iranian diplomatic corps.

Iran's best offer, in exchange for which the US is slobbering to agree to sit tight for as long as the leisurely Iranian parliamentary election may take, is to transfer control of the hostages from the militants who occupied the embassy to the "government" (whatever that may be). The argument is that once the government is in control, we will have someone reliable to deal with. Yet we are negotiating for this "concession" with that very same government. If the government can take control anytime it wishes, it is effectively in control already. In any event, dignifying these irrelevant distinctions about "control" undermines what ought to be a basic principle for the United States: that the leaders of the Iranian Islamic republic (including the ayatollahs) are responsible for whatever has happened or will happen to the hostages since the moment these gentlemen acquiesced in the seizure of our embassy.

Throughout this crisis, President Carter has remained consistent about only one matter, and on this one he is wrong. He told the building trades gathering: "No one in the government of the United States has apologized to anyone in the government of Iran because we have nothing for which to apologize." Carter's refusal to apologize is, in our opinion, a strategic mistake. His insistence that there is nothing to apologize for is downright offensive, even to Americans, let alone Iranians. There is plenty for the US to apologize for to Iran, and Carter surely knows it. As Irving Howe and Michael Walzer wrote recently in this journal, in a different context, "No question that human beings can ask themselves is more attractive morally than, 'Were we wrong?'" It was probably wrong for us to have helped install the shah and certainly wrong to tolerate his many abuses. We certainly would not act this way today. If saying so will alleviate the suffering of our hostage citizens by assuaging Iranian anger, and if it will dispel the moral haze that prevents serious action to regain their freedom, then we should say so.

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Gerald W. Johnson

"The essential weakness is the President's misconception of his position. He is not a referee. He has in his hands the reins and the whip, and if he fails to use either at the appropriate time, his administration will fail. . . . The President is in the midst of the fight, and he is going to trample down his foes, or be trampled."

These harsh and perceptive words were not written for Jimmy Carter, apropos, as they are. They were written for Dwight Eisenhower in January 1958 in this magazine. The man who wrote them, Gerald White Johnson, began writing his biweekly column here in 1953 and continued as a contributing editor until his death on March 22, 1980, at the age of 89. To be sure, he wrote little in his last years, and most readers even as old as *TNR*'s editors will not remember his oddly titled column, "The Superficial Aspect"—an all-but-superficial commentary on political life, erudite and commonsensical, plainspoken, and full of wise, trenchant wit.

Johnson's life was a full one: besides authoring some 30 books (his last, published in 1976, was a volume of social and political observations called *America Watching*) and penning countless editorials for the *Baltimore Sun*, Johnson was an early and passionate supporter of FDR's New Deal, speechwriter to Adlai Stevenson in two campaigns, friend of H.L. Mencken, and even won a Peabody Award for his television commentaries in the early 1950s. He was the sort, according to an admirer, who was impatient with all forms of "slick flapdoodle." No media star, he appeared on TV with his script before him, his glasses on, and his hearing aid showing. No stranger to the corridors of power, he held in special contempt the foolishness and dishonesty of politicians— especially Republicans—and said so. Their qualities appalled him as they touched his own life, and the national life.

Remarking once on the funereal atmosphere in Washington during the late Eisenhower years, he first scolded the Democrats—as he would certainly now—for failing "to give serious consideration to the hypothesis that this generation may live long and prosper. . . ." Then he drew back into a more philosophical posture: "We must, indeed, die, but it is possible that a number of interesting, amusing, perhaps inspiring things may happen first. . . . For instance, there should be some organization of Civil Defense against a sudden outbreak of genuine peace. . . . It is depressing, very depressing, so depressing that when Washington gets about five degrees more lachrymose, it is going to become comic."

There can be no doubt that Gerald White Johnson saw to it that the interesting, inspiring, and amusing things happened first.

Coming:
Nicholas von Hoffman
on Third Parties.

Politics

Morality Play

New York and Connecticut, said the Kennedy people, represented the beginning of a national trend, the complete turnabout of the Democratic presidential race. Kennedy's deputy campaign manager, Paul Kirk, told reporters at a Washington breakfast March 28 that his candidate's two eastern victories had signalled "the start of the collapse" of President Carter's support. Voters were at last beginning to shift their focus from "what they think they know about Kennedy's life to what they do know about their own lives." In coming weeks, he said, voters would reject Carter on the issues of economics, foreign policy, and competence, and turn to Kennedy. Kirk anticipated that "some erosion" of Carter support would show up in Wisconsin April 1, but that "political gravity" would take evident hold in Pennsylvania April 22. By June 3, when Democrats choose 20.9 percent of their delegates in eight primaries including California, New Jersey, and Ohio, Carter would be in "a hell of a spin," and might not be nominated even if he should arrive at the August convention with more delegates than Kennedy.

President Carter, meanwhile, told Meg Greenfield of the *Washington Post* that New York and Pennsylvania weren't nationally significant at all. "I think that unwarranted press reports that the election was over convinced [voters] that they needed not to decide between the two candidates necessarily, but to send me a message about things that they did not like."

Carter's lopsided victories April 1 in Wisconsin and Kansas seem to be evidence that Carter was more correct than Kirk—that there was no national trend at work and that New York and Connecticut were a message-sending aberration. But exit polling in the various primary states suggests a different explanation. The polling suggests that Democrats in the Boston-New York urban complex have a completely different idea of their party's presidential candidates than Democrats in the Midwest, the South, the West, and even upper New England. In Wisconsin last week, as in Illinois, Iowa, New Hampshire, and Florida, Democrats seemed to see Carter as an honest, deeply principled man doing his very best with nearly intractable foreign and domestic problems. They may see Kennedy as more capable than Carter in solving some of the country's problems, particularly on the

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Correspondence

The Court's selective gagging

To the editors:

In your March 15 issue, the last line of TRB's page expresses the hope that the High Court doesn't extend the *Snepp* gag rule all over Washington. I suggest it hasn't and it won't, because it appears to be in the business of managing the news. It takes royalties away from an author who violated no secrets, but who did not submit his critical work on foreign policy directions for prior review. It allows a former secretary of state and a CIA director to retain their royalties, but fails to mention the prior review these authors received.

But the recent Court ruling on Kissinger's tapes is even more disturbing. It appears to overlook the former secretary's flim-flam with official records, and implies by its silence that such records—generated by carrying out duties of an appointive position—are his personal property. This, in turn, would mean that thousands of official appointees might consider their recorded actions while in office as personal, to be used or misused as each appointee saw fit. Moreover, the ruling enables this particular secretary to interpret and justify controversial foreign policies designed during his suzerainty, whereas political scientists, historians, the press, and the public must wait several decades to examine and assess the same material. It smacks of judicial consecration of one individual as the interpreter of these records for a period of years.

Some of my neighbors and I worry about more of such "equal justice under the law" determinations. They appear to have wider and more dangerous implications. Your recognition of these dangers is very heartening.

Frank K. Hefner
Old Lyme, Connecticut

The domestic scene

To the editors:

Anne Colamosca's article on housework ("Capitalism and Housework," *TNR*, March 29) raises an interesting question: if we admit that it is socially worthwhile to have people earn a living wage doing housework, why aren't we doing more about it?

Our tax structure currently allows working parents a deduction for the cost of child care, but not for cleaning up the house. The rationale, I suppose, is that the intent is to encourage the care of children, not the employment of housecleaners. But what do we say then about the government programs that encourage businesses to hire the marginally employable? And what do we say about the paradox of businessmen who do not hesitate to hire a cleaning company for their office, but won't hire an individual to clean their home?

After all, which is better, to support people totally through welfare, with subsequent loss of self-esteem, or to support them partly through subsidized employment, no matter what the job? Let's start to work now for a tax-break program for those who employ household technicians.

Patrick J. O'Connor
Danbury, Connecticut

To the editors:

Thank you for bring us Anne Colamosca and her prescriptions for dealing with today's burning social issue—the crisis in domestic help. Now let's review.

Prescription 1: Linguistic inflation. Henceforth we will call the cleaning lady a "household technician" since simple, honest language is deemed patronizing. (If Colamosca thinks "household technician" *isn't* patronizing, she doesn't know what "patronize" means.)

Prescription 2: Lawyerization. Simple person-to-person transactions are a no-no. Our "technician" must now have a contract, thereby introducing lawyers—that locust swarm—into yet another area of our over-lawyered society.

Prescription 3: Federal spending. Do Washington bureaucrats have trouble finding good help? Are Nicaraguan cleaning women frightened by flush toilets? Does life hold any inconvenience whatever? By all means let us bill the taxpayer for a new federal program!

Rarely has a single article so hilariously embodied all the evils of today's corrupt liberalism, and I thank you for it.

George R. Paterson
Evanston, Illinois

Hit him when he's down

To the editors:

Martin Peretz's guilt about hitting Ted Kennedy when he's down (Washington Diarist, *TNR*, March 29) may now be assuaged by the fact that Senator Kennedy is no longer quite so down.

Peretz should feel extremely guilty, however, in saying that, "Ted Kennedy has done a disservice to the country in running against Jimmy Carter," and especially about the grounds for his statement, "as long as Ted was in the bullpen no one else would play ball."

There was no other person of presidential caliber in the Democratic party with the national constituency, the boldness, and the resources of personal character to mount a challenge to an incumbent Democratic president, even one who has so sadly failed both his party and his nation.

The editorial "Bring Back the Pols" in the previous issue decried the "new politics" which was denying candidacy to "political heavyweights." In Senator Kennedy we have a political heavyweight who combines government experience both broad and deep with a personal courage and commitment which has survived a series of tragedies and stresses which would have shattered a lesser man.

Stuart Woods
Atlanta, Georgia

In support of controls

To the editors:

It is gratifying to have a publication as widely read as *The New Republic* publish an article that recognizes that controls have stopped inflation when they were used ("Time for Controls?" *TNR*, February 23). Those who oppose controls have tried to convince the public that controls don't work by noting that when they are removed prices move upward again. You rightly point out that this will happen if nothing is done to remove the causal factors that were pushing prices up in the first place.

It did take a huge bureaucracy to administer controls in World War II. But during the Korean period controls were effective when administered by a relatively small number of people. If we use the knowledge and experience gained in World War II and the Korean period we should be able to administer the program much more effectively now, and with fewer people, particularly if controls are applied only to the non-competitive segment of the economy, such as oligopolies and health services.

The main approach of this administration to control inflation is through tight money and high interest rates in order to reduce demand. It is about as effective as Ford's WIN buttons. In the first place it is based on the erroneous assumption that this inflation is caused by an excess of aggregative demand over supply. In

(continued on page 40)

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domestic side, but they are fundamentally swayed by the contrast in the character of the two men. They trust Carter; they don't trust Kennedy. The ABC exit poll in Wisconsin, for example, showed that 62 percent of Democratic voters said issues were the most important factor determining their votes. Of these, Carter beat Kennedy marginally, 41 percent to 38 percent, although Kennedy beat Carter handily among voters especially concerned about inflation. However, among the voters who said character was most important to them, Carter won 72-19. These voters said Carter was more truthful than Kennedy and more likely to stick to his principles.

In New York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts, Democratic voters must be more jaded. Possibly they have heard so much about Chappaquiddick over the last 10 years that it has lost its power to affect them. It's also possible that they feel the impact of inflation and budget cuts more severely than voters do elsewhere. At any rate, pollsters in New York found that complaints over the economy and foreign policy dominated voters' explanations for choosing Kennedy over Carter. Eastern urbanites may not admire Kennedy's character, but what's important to them is that he's competent in problem solving.

It may be a matter of regional bias, but I think the New Yorkers are closer to the truth than Democrats elsewhere. When you examine Carter's performance and Kennedy's program on issues, it is not difficult to conclude that Kennedy offers more promise of being able to solve America's biggest problems. And despite the country's image of Carter as a moral paragon, I'd say Kennedy is running a far more principled and truthful campaign.

No one can be sure what Edward Kennedy would do in foreign policy if he were elected, but he could scarcely perform more irresolutely than Jimmy Carter has. Carter has reversed position on practically every issue of foreign and military policy. He favored pulling troops out of Korea, then opposed it. He wanted Pentagon spending cuts, then big increases. He pushed the neutron bomb, then opposed it. He vetoed the B-1 bomber, now the Pentagon is studying it again. He said Brezhnev shared his own dedication to peace, then accused the Soviets of starting the biggest crisis since World War II with their invasion of Afghanistan. And lately he has paid so little attention to the Afghan crisis that American allies and even American Olympic athletes doubt its urgency. Camp David was a great success, but Carter has also made huge mistakes in the Middle East: offering to reopen the Geneva conference with Soviet participation, toying with support for Palestinian independence, switching positions at the UN. Edward Kennedy is open to criticism that he is too dovish and anti-Pentagon, but at least he is consistent.

Carter stumbled into the Iran crisis out of in-

drawing by Mike Peters

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competence, by letting the shah into the United States without taking adequate precautions to protect the US embassy in Tehran. Now he seems to be manipulating the crisis for political advantage. Since the embassy was taken over, he has claimed the hostage crisis prevented him from traveling out of Washington to campaign, even though he has spent hours on the telephone with voters in one primary state after the other. Last week, after losing New York and Connecticut, he changed his position to say that he might just travel out of Washington to address "town meetings," but would not engage in "political" activities, as if there is any difference. And he said he might travel out of Washington for political events if the hostages were transferred from the embassy to the custody of the Iranian government, as if they would be any less captive. Meanwhile, in Washington, Carter has made two recent speeches which could not be called anything but partisan and political. The only possible conclusion to be drawn from all this is that Carter is using the hostages as an excuse not to have to debate Kennedy publicly on an equal basis. Kennedy has raised legitimate questions about Carter's handling of Iran and other foreign policy issues, and has done so rather mildly. For this, Carter has impugned Kennedy's patriotism. This is not the behavior of a deeply moral man.

Carter's post-New York election analysis indicated, he told Meg Greenfield, that the shah's departure for Egypt had been "a very negative factor." The administration seems to have done everything possible to preclude similar factors from affecting voters in Wisconsin. Carter established a deadline for transfer of custody of the hostages to the Iran government on March 31, the day before Wisconsin. When confusing reports began circulating in Iran and Washington about messages Carter had sent to Iranian officials, the White House dispatched pollster Patrick Caddell and press secretary Jody Powell to Milwaukee to assess and deal with the trouble. With reporters doubting Carter's credibility, Powell tried to light backfires against Kennedy's credibility—accusing Kennedy in a press conference of deceiving voters by shifting his positions on Israeli settlements and the danger of the Afghan invasion. Neither allegation held water. They were designed to reinforce Kennedy's image of untrustworthiness.

Because of the Iran confusion, Caddell's polls began showing a steep decline in support for the president in Wisconsin. In one 24-hour period over the weekend, Caddell's poll showed, Carter's lead slipped from 30 points down to 15 points. The slippage was reversed, in part, by an urgent public relations effort involving President Carter himself. At 8:30 p.m. Sunday night, Carter met with five executives of major newspapers: Ben Bradlee of the *Washington Post*, Murray Gart of the *Washington Star*; Aldo Beckman and Jack Nelson, Washington bureau chiefs of the *Chicago Tribune* and *Los Angeles Times*; and John Finney, deputy bureau chief of the *New York Times*. According to participants, Carter vehemently denied having sent any message to Iranian officials "apologizing" for past US policy or "understanding" the embassy takeover. Carter did leave the impression, though, that some of his messages may have left open possible US acknowledgment of "mistakes" in US policy. Carter also told the newspaper executives that he had told Iran that his administration would not impede Iran's attempt to sue for repatriation of Iranian assets allegedly stolen by the shah.

Finally—and most important for the Wisconsin effort—Carter told the executives that a deal had been cut according to which Iran's president Bani-Sadr would announce at three a.m. Monday, Washington time, a decision of Iran's Revolutionary Council to take over custody of the US hostages. Most of the editors understood that their session with the president was off the record, but nevertheless it led to upbeat reports in Monday newspaper stories on the Iran crisis. As it turned out, Bani-Sadr postponed his announcement by 24 hours, but the White House public relations effort worked anyway. On Monday, reports out of Iran and Washington indicated that a break in the hostage crisis was coming, and Carter called television anchormen during the day to be sure they conveyed the good news to viewers Monday evening. Tuesday morning, election day, Carter went on television at 7:18 a.m. to announce that Iran had taken a "positive step" justifying continued suspension of American sanctions. The truth is that conditions were attached to Iran's decision. The hostages are still in the custody of the embassy militants, but Carter rode to victory in Wisconsin. Exit polls showed that 63 percent of Democratic voters thought Carter more competent than Kennedy on foreign policy.

Carter was not as successful in clouding voters' minds on the economy, but he tried. Carter's economic policy is a disaster. Before Carter discovered that inflation was a problem, he favored tax cuts and spending policies that helped spur inflation. This year alone, he has put forward two budgets—the first with a generous deficit, best designed to prevent Democrats from defecting to Kennedy. The latest, signed on the eve of Wisconsin, is rhetorically anti-inflationary and seems geared most of all for political impact against Ronald Reagan. The new economic plan contains nothing that would stimulate US productivity—the only sure cure for inflation in the long run—and includes a 10-cent gasoline tax which will stimulate inflation without inducing conservation.

Kennedy, by contrast, has a straightforward set of economic programs based on the traditional Democratic principles of expanded government control over the economy. Kennedy wants wage and price controls and higher taxes on oil companies. He wants to reduce the budget deficit by cutting down on business tax deductions for executive lunches and first-class air travel, rather than reducing school lunch programs and

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urban jobs programs. He also wants gas rationing. Carter, instead of coming out to Wisconsin to debate with Kennedy on the merits of their rival programs, granted an exclusive interview to the *Milwaukee Journal* for publication Sunday, to accuse Kennedy of deceptiveness and demagoguery on economics. Despite this effort—again, not the behavior of a moral purist—voters in Wisconsin who cared most about inflation had the sense to see that Kennedy's program was closer to a cure than Carter's, by 53 to 23 percent.

The Wisconsin primary was decided on the basis of personality, character, trust, and principle. So, apparently, will most primary elections outside the urban Northeast. Pennsylvania is an odd case—half in the East, half in the Midwest. Kennedy is hoping that issue-consciousness will overtake character-consciousness all over the state on April 22, and give him a victory. Chappaquiddick is bound to haunt Kennedy forever politically, but there are other issues of principle in this campaign. If voters paid half as much attention to Carter's moral lapses as they do to Kennedy's, this would be a much closer race.

Morton Kondracke

Waldheim's latest debacle.

UNhelpful

At Tehran, in 1968, the United Nations held an International Conference on Human Rights, with funds and facilities provided by the shah. The shah himself delivered the opening address on the sanctity of human rights. The shah's sister, Princess Ashraf, presided over the conference. The United Nations secretary-general, U Thant, in thanking His Imperial Majesty for his beneficence, found it "very fitting" that the conference should take place in Iran; and went on to condemn "massacres, tortures, arbitrary arrests, cruel detentions, and summary executions" in far-flung and unspecified areas of the globe.

Over decades of the shah's rule, UN organs availed themselves of special donations from the Pahlavis for costly and unproductive verbal exercises in the promulgation of "rights," and in return enabled Pahlavi nominees to preside over numerous UN human rights gatherings. Throughout that time, UN officials mercilessly ignored a huge body of verified information on political persecutions and atrocities in Iran, and many thousands of appeals from the shah's victims. In accordance with UN procedure, such appeals were either referred back to the offending government for "comment" or considered by the UN Commission on Human Rights—over which ineffable body Princess Ashraf for a time presided.

In March 1980 the recently established UN commission of inquiry returned from Iran empty-handed, leaving behind the American hostages as well as their own expressions of horror at the shah's atrocities. The commission assured mutilated survivors that "the international community will know to what unimaginable lengths the violations of human rights were carried in this land. . . . Your sacrifice will not have been in vain." Commission member Adib Daoudy of Syria, who has proclaimed that approximately 90,000 people died in the shah's torture chambers (though he headed Syria's delegation to Tehran in 1968), declared: "It's awful. It's dreadful."

Despite such protestations, the UN's unwillingness to deliver on its promises remains unchanged. In January, Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim left Tehran promising to "do whatever we can to ensure that this mutilation of human beings will never take place again." Yet once safely home, Waldheim expressed through his wife—in a grotesque interview with the *Washington Post*—his determination never to say "a bad word about the shah. Whatever he did was his problem."

In keeping with the modern revolutionary pattern, "rights" emptily promised have been claimed in deadly earnest. The United Nations, far from being "our best hope for peace," has contributed to the escalating violence and violation by its refusal to give any effective voice to the grievances of populations, minorities, or individuals.

Acting at the direction of its member governments, the UN has a capital interest in preventing political complainants from obtaining a proper hearing, let alone redress. UN performance in the human rights field since the organization's inception plainly shows that UN "rights" organs have been maintained to short-circuit charges of governmental abuse and to screen violations from public view—as in Iran in 1968, where the babble in the conference hall was employed to drown out unseemly sounds from the adjoining torture-chamber; or, as in the case of Chile in the period following Allende's death, when an East-West bargain was struck in the UN Human Rights Commission to minimize reports of torture in Chile in exchange for silence on Soviet dissidents.

The few—and so far largely procedural—improvements in the recent performance of the UN Human Rights Commission are related to the emergence, and contrasting efficacy, of private rights groups such as Amnesty International, which, together with the very intensification of world violence, have increasingly exposed UN delinquency.

Like all UN organs, the United Nations bureaucracy is subservient to the demands of national authorities, whatever their insensitivity to explicit UN principles. Kurt Waldheim felt able to extol the Pahlavis' "humanitarian ideals" and ignore their atrocities as

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Some people describe the editor of Harper's as 'brilliant,' 'irritating,' 'superb,' 'on target,' 'cantankerous,' 'mellifluous,' 'scurrilous,' 'iconoclastic,' 'grim,' 'revolting,' 'unique,' and 'the best reason for reading Harper's.'

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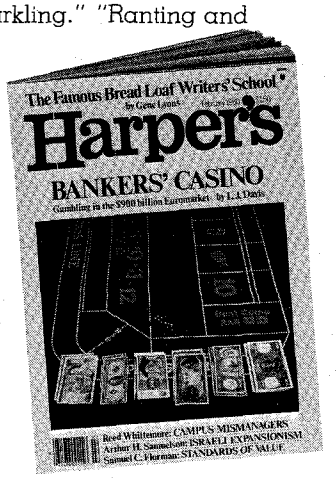

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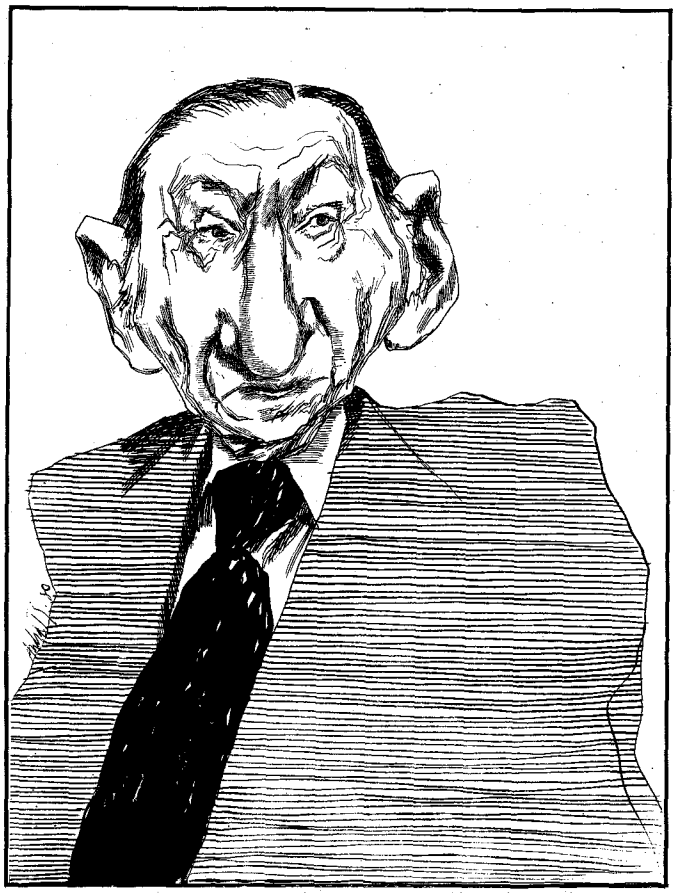

drawing of Kurt Waldheim by András Goldinger.

long as the shah was the acknowledged head of a munificent UN member government—supported by the United States, a member nation more powerful still. With the shah's fall, "authority" in Iran devolved on the present factions, and the UN leadership, in unabashed reversal, declared its moral outrage and set up its commission of inquiry. Were the Pahlavis to regain power, we might expect to see—under the UN Vicar-of-Bray syndrome—a UN tribunal investigating the plentiful abuses of the ayotallah. I have seen no suggestion that the UN commission of inquiry might more usefully have been set up while the shah's abuses were in progress in Iran, although this is precisely the type of investigation undertaken, with scant funds and at considerable risk, by private human rights agencies.

Far from displaying humility over his misstatements and failures in the Iranian crisis, Kurt Waldheim "expressed scorn," according to the *New York Times*, "for critics who, in his view, had not devised any other approach. 'Nobody has offered me any alternative.'" This critic has in fact been proposing, for a decade, specific measures by which the United Nations secretariat could set about acquiring, however tardily, the stature and credibility needed for effective mediation. Every thinking member of the UN staff is aware that proper alternatives to UN debility propose themselves daily, and are repudiated by the UN administration as incompatible with the corrupt forms in which the organization has established itself.

The United Nations has set itself against recognizing, let alone profiting from, the context in which the Iranian experience is taking place. Just as, at a recent press conference, Jimmy Carter curtly dismissed as "ancient history" a question as to whether current events demonstrated past errors in American policy in Iran, so the United Nations cultivates amnesia toward its own responsibility. "Responsibility" is not a word in use at the United Nations.

Over the past year or two, deputations of concerned UN employees have approached the "more serious" member governments, through their UN mission, in an attempt to gain support for essential reforms. The response of these governments may be summarized as follows: we are aware of the deplorable condition of the United Nations secretariat, and of its adverse effect on the organization's undertakings; but we are not disposed to make—in the words of one representative—"the expenditure of political capital necessary to effect the required reforms." In other words, the United Nation's ineffectuality, so deeply the product of governmental intentions, will continue to satisfy even its "more serious" members until global violence passes the bounds of any conceivable form of international mediation. This attitude, however, assumes that United Nations services can be allowed to deteriorate indefinitely without attracting public attention, and that the UN staff body will continue to tolerate a degree of maladministration and injustice scarcely definable as civilized. In fact, the government of Belgium is transferring its contribution for Cambodian relief from the UN to effective private agencies, such as Oxfam.

Analogous to the Iranian hostage crisis is the case of a United Nations international employee, Alicja Wesolowska, a secretary of Polish nationality arrested last August at Warsaw en route to a UN assignment. Deprived of her elementary rights, as well as those due her as an international civil servant, Wesolowska was held in solitary confinement until her trial in March, when she was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment for "espionage," a charge for which there is no concrete evidence. Wesolowska's captivity and trial have taken place in flagrant violation of international conventions to which the Polish government is a signatory. In her case, however, the United Nations administration has shown itself not only helpless, but reluctant to respond with any public assertion of a principle vital to its own survival. And a staff appeal for initiation of procedures to take the case to the World Court has so far received no action.

Concern among UN staff over the Wesolowska matter has brought to light a number of other cases of UN employees who have been arbitrarily arrested while performing UN duties; and who, in some cases, are presumed to have died in prison. No visible effort has been made by the United Nations administration on their behalf. As a UN official explained to a concerned inquirer, "They are all junior employees." And no powerful government is exercised over their fate.

No significant reform of the United Nations can

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occur without a profound change in the quality of UN press coverage. Reporting on the UN is traditionally indulgent to the point of infantilism, and sometimes indistinguishable from the vast propaganda apparatus maintained at public expense by the UN itself. In the case of Iran in particular, there is apparently no attempt by the press to relate UN failures to their larger context, nor any evidence of independent research. Waldheim's discomfiture at Tehran in January was connected, by the UN press, to nothing more substantial than his having once kissed Princess Ashraf's hand.

While the UN commission of inquiry was being formed, portentous UN bulletins were prominent in each day's newspapers. On an evident assumption that Iranians cannot read, reassurances emanated from the UN to the press to the effect that the UN inquiry would be merely "cosmetic," and "would enable Iran's new government to tell its people that their complaints have received international sanction and thus permit the authorities to free the captives." The *New York Times* relayed that "United Nations officials are making little pretense that they have suddenly been overcome with shock and remorse over the shah's regime; rather, the Commission's investigation is seen as a device to get the hostages released."

Waldheim was described—presumably according to a UN definition of intrepidity—as having "taken a great risk"; and a timeworn UN formula of strength through incompetence was exhumed in the claim, solemnly relayed, that "the United Nations' very lack of precision, its fuzzy improvisation are precisely the qualities needed to fit the complex politics and unsettled internal power struggles in Iran."

As realities obtruded, front-page assertions gave way to more obscurely placed references to "delicate negotiations." With the collapse of the commission's effort, reporting dwindled to uncritical reflections on the confused and inscrutable factions competing for power in Iran; with still no attempt to explore the confusions of the distinctly scrutable United Nations.

It seems probable, at this time, that the hostages at Tehran eventually will be released. Iran has pressing reasons, internal and external, to settle the matter. The journalist who brings the true condition of the UN before the public will make history. He will also pave the way for revision of international organizations. Jimmy Carter and Kurt Waldheim are facing their respective reelections and, in their urgent need for political capital, can be expected to exert their utmost efforts to resolve the impasse at Tehran. It is idle, however, to pretend that Waldheim—insofar as he retains a role—has a humanitarian stake in the fate of the hostages. Nothing in the past conduct of his office, particularly as it refers to Iran, suggests such a concern.

Shirley Hazzard

Shirley Hazzard's most recent novel is *The Transit of Venus* (Viking).

A separatist in deed.

Levesque's Coup

Ottawa

A multi-billion-dollar contract for the sale of US fighter-interceptor aircraft to Canada suddenly has become ensnarled in Canadian separatist politics. The problem, triggered by Quebec premier René Levesque, will have the effect of further delaying the long-planned (and much-needed) modernization of North American air defenses. Levesque, the prime mover of his French-speaking province's separation from English-speaking Canada, pulled off his surprise coup in late March, forcing the federal government in Ottawa to postpone the crucial decision on the purchase of the US planes. In the end, Levesque's move may determine Canada's choice between the two competing American aircraft; it already has injected a troubling question into any future consideration of Canadian defense policy: is what's best for Quebec necessarily best for Canada?

Under Levesque's plan for "Sovereignty-Association" between Quebec and Canada, defense and foreign policy are the only areas of common responsibility, with the province acquiring virtual autonomy in all other matters. In propounding his concept, Levesque has frequently invoked his commitment to common defense in order to allay the fears of other Canadians. Ironically, the premier's move to link separatist aspirations to the aircraft purchase has effectively paralyzed Canada's immediate defense plans. Canadian observers now believe Canadian prime minister Pierre Trudeau's government will defer its decision until after Quebec's June referendum on separation negotiations.

This immensely complex story involves both US and Canadian business and defense interests, but it essentially boils down to the competition between McDonnell Douglas's F-18A Hornet and General Dynamics's F-16. The Canadian contract is for between 130 and 150 advanced aircraft intended to replace the Royal Canadian Air Force's totally outdated and obsolete planes. Aside from becoming the backbone for a modernized RCAF, the new aircraft will play an integral role in the jointly operated US-Canadian North American Air Defense Command; NORAD consists of the early-warning radar fence known as the DEW line, and jet fighter-interceptors based in the US and Canada which are designed to engage manned bombers coming over the Arctic. Such a threat has increased in recent years due to the deployment of the Backfire, the new Soviet intercontinental bomber.

Five years ago, the Canadian government approved in principle the funds for the new aircraft—roughly three billion dollars. Two more years elapsed before the actual competition among US and European manufacturers was opened. The basic requirement, apart from meeting aircraft performance standards, was that the

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chosen manufacturer commit himself to invest another three billion dollars in Canadian "industrial benefits" over a six-year period. For the US companies, this is a generally acceptable condition: there are international precedents for such compensatory arrangements.

The list of competitors was narrowed down by November 1978 to the F-18A and the F-16. The competition between McDonnell Douglas and General Dynamics was fierce, as each spent hundreds of millions of dollars on the preparation of their proposals, anticipatory production-line studies and adjustments, hard-sell newspaper and magazine promotion in Canada, and briefings for Canadian provincial premiers and legislators. Recalling past scandals in international aircraft sales, the government forbade socializing between Canadians preparing the recommendations and US manufacturers' representatives.

From a military and industrial viewpoint, each model offered special advantages. The single-engine F-16 had won the NATO competition several years ago, probably the century's toughest and biggest battle of this kind, and it has been ordered by the US Air Force for its own use. It is therefore in production at General Dynamics's Forth Worth, Texas, installations, and is regarded as a well-tested plane. It is also cheaper on a unit basis. The F-18A is not yet operational—McDonnell Douglas at St. Louis, Missouri, has built only a few development aircraft—but it is more attractive to Canadian pilots because it has two engines, a major survival consideration in the vastness of the Arctic. Apart from this factor, however, both planes are considered adequate for Canadian needs. The respective "industrial benefits" offered by the two companies are difficult to compare because McDonnell Douglas has been less forthcoming publicly than General Dynamics, but economic considerations clearly influenced the Canadian decision-making process.

The basic study of the two aircraft, from all viewpoints, was conducted by the Fighter Aircraft Program, a special task force in Ottawa headed by Brigadier General Paul D. Manson. General Manson has not disclosed his conclusions, but the assumption among well-informed Canadians is that the recommendation he submitted to the Canadian Cabinet in mid-March was for McDonnell Douglas's F-18A. The Cabinet was to make its final decision around April 15.

This was where matters stood on March 27, when Premier Levesque threw a monkey wrench into the proceedings with a statement that the F-16—not the F-18A—should be chosen by the Cabinet on the grounds that the General Dynamics "industrial benefits" package was more favorable to Quebec. The company had indicated that about one-half of the three-billion-dollar package would go to Quebec, since Pratt and Whitney Aircraft of Canada Ltd., whose US parent company builds F-16 engines, is located in the province. Some F-16 engine components could be made in Quebec.

From that moment on, the US aircraft contract became a Canadian political issue. Only days earlier, the Quebec National Assembly had authorized the Levesque government to hold a referendum in the province, late in May or in June, to determine whether the voters wish it to enter into negotiations with the federal government on a new form of relationship with the rest of Canada. From the time his Parti Québecois was elected in 1976, Levesque has pushed for such a referendum, the first step toward his goal of "Sovereignty-Association." The National Assembly's approval of the vaguely worded referendum question was a victory for Levesque, who is easily one of North America's most gifted politicians. It set off an increasingly bitter dispute between "oui" and "non" voters in Quebec, with most of the English-speaking inhabitants and a number of the province's "Francophones" against the negotiation. Polls late in March suggested that "oui" will carry by 52 percent, and in the eyes of the opponents this would signify a major move toward separation, though such an act would require a second referendum after the negotiations with Ottawa—possibly a matter of years.

Most informed Canadians suspect that Levesque's move on the F-16 was directly related to the referendum, causing a major problem for Canada's prime minister Trudeau. Though Trudeau is a federalist and a foe of separation, his Liberal party was voted back in power earlier this year, after a brief interlude of Conservative rule, with the aid of massive votes from his native Quebec.

Levesque placed himself in a superb "no-lose" position by coming out in favor of the F-16. He is believed to have reasoned that if the Trudeau Cabinet decides for the F-18A, as recommended by General Manson's team, the separatists will have a perfect referendum argument, pointing out that, once more, the federal government has ignored the province's needs. Conversely, if the Cabinet overrules the Manson recommendation, Levesque can claim credit for winning considerable economic benefits for Quebec. And these benefits are expected over the years to exceed the initial figure with the development of greater US-Canadian industrial cooperation.

The respective merits of the two planes have been lost in the separatist crisis. Pierre Trudeau has found himself in a bind: if he chooses for Quebec, he will have the increasingly restive western provinces plus Ontario on his back; if he chooses "against" Quebec, he will have played into Levesque's hands. The seriousness of this political problem was quickly recognized in Ottawa.

Coming:
Stephen Chapman
on James Reston.

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Within 48 hours of Levesque's aircraft end-run, the government let it be known that the final decision between the F-16 and the F-18A would be postponed to allow time for further studies. No date was given.

In theory, this could mean a delay of no more than two months. Should Levesque win the approaching referendum, however, the Cabinet may be pushed into further politically motivated postponements in the light of Canada-wide reactions to the Quebec vote. If this is the case, the fighter-interceptors that were to be delivered starting in 1982 may be delayed even further; and Premier Levesque's separatism will have again set back the urgently needed modernization of North American air defenses.

Tad Szulc

Taking on the principalities and powers.

Ronald Reagan, Populist

by Robert Coles

Gerald Ford, for whatever reasons, self-serving or otherwise, has declared at least once his doubt that Ronald Reagan can win the presidency, and so have many others. I've certainly been one of the doubters. For a while, the idea of Reagan as the Republican nominee struck me as preposterous—that one of this nation's two major parties, within striking distance of the White House, would choose a nearly 70-year-old actor who, in the past, has fared badly when compared with various potential Democratic antagonists in speculative polls. Over and over the example of Barry Goldwater comes to mind—hence the pleasurable anticipation if ideological passion were to prevail: an easy Democratic win, come November.

I go back, every few months, to neighborhoods where I used to work regularly—streetcar suburbs and working-class communities, as they get called by ambitiously categorical social scientists who have a name for everyone and everything. In Lynn, Massachusetts, a factory town, I've recently been spotting Reagan bumper stickers in homes one thinks of (maybe out of nostalgia) as Democratic: policemen, General Electric factory workers, truck drivers, salesmen, office workers. Not in all such homes, but enough to prompt a scratch or two of the head and the inevitable one-word question. "I'll tell you *why*," a machinist answered: "I'm sick and tired of these politicians lying to us, making promises they don't deliver on, spending dollars they don't have. You work hard, and you can't keep up, even so. And then your wife goes to work—and meanwhile there are these welfare chiselers getting caught and you have to hear about them on the radio going home, and see their faces on the TV. Today, everyone is making a fool of this country. They're laughing at us all over the world. What the hell good are they—the missiles and bombs? Some snot-faced students in Tehran are dragging us through the mud and we take it. We keep taking it. Enough, I say—enough! If Eisenhower was alive, he'd have *done* something. Reagan would do something. He'd draw the line. He'd stop our money from becoming worthless. Who is drawing the line in anything, these days?"

I heard that link, Eisenhower and Reagan, on February 25 of this year. It was easy then to dismiss the connection as idiosyncratic, the product of a truculent, intemperate mind; a man letting off the proverbial steam—before (one reassures oneself, with the condescension and smugness that characterize one's own way of dealing with the world) coming around, finally, to the Democratic party. What will Reagan, after all, do for the labor unions? But that man doesn't believe that the president of the United States intends to do anything more for "the unions" than Reagan would; whereas Reagan has said a lot of things that appeal to a particular voter of ordinary means, and one suspects, to many like him.

Recently, I went with my family back South, then out to the West, where we used to live. In New Mexico and in other western states (Utah, Texas, California, and even supposedly "liberal" Oregon) I heard an enthusiasm for Reagan that many easterners, including certain kinds of Republicans, might find hard to understand. This country has, so far, survived its various social, cultural, political, and ideological divisions—in the case of the North/South one, just barely, and only after a Civil War. But in times of growing economic stress, those divisions loom more significant. They become a means by which people rally around what appear to be more satisfying, discrete, manageable, and clear-cut loyalties. If inflation seems an impossible mystery, even to economists and presidents, and if our foreign affairs seem hopelessly

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complex and muddled, why not fasten one's hopes and fears, enthusiasms and antagonisms, on issues such as abortion or the Equal Rights Amendment, or the question of water (the control of it, the access to it), the last a terribly important everyday question in the Southwest, including California? Why not think of oneself more and more as a westerner, or a financially vulnerable citizen who lives in New York City?

Barry Goldwater's recent autobiography is fascinating: its strenuous assaults on the Ivy League, the Rockefellers, the Trilateral Commission amount to a frontal attack on the East, with all its social and intellectual pretensions and its obvious cultural and political power. Right-wing populism it is often called; the idea is an injustice to what many populists, historically, were all about. A subtle view of human nature, less categorically psychological and sociological and more novelistic, would emphasize the ironies, inconsistencies, and contradictions that characterize all our lives; and which, in the case of many well-to-do, or for that matter rather poor (though politically conservative) westerners, take the form of a sweeping, wrong-headed denunciation of eastern life: an overly suspicious, all too simplified rendition of how things work along the eastern seaboard. Easterners, however, can be similarly "provincial," in the form of a persisting, arrogant self-importance—an affected posture, really, aimed at concealing ignorance of or a lack of interest in a region and its people.

In Albuquerque I heard Barry Goldwater's assaults echoed again and again, with Reagan proclaimed the hero who would change things. In a traditionally Democratic Chicano working-class neighborhood, no less, I saw more of those Reagan stickers and heard, sadly, the politics of scarcity and fear at work: racial slurs directed at blacks for being demanding or "lazy" and at Indians for not being "really part of the country"; statements about our "weakness" abroad, and how it ought to be remedied through larger defense expenditures; and an insistence that it is government spending on social programs and an unbalanced budget that are to blame for where we are economically. From many Anglos, ordinary people who were once part of "the New Deal Coalition," one hears similar talk, if anything at a higher pitch, and plenty of Reagan loyalty. One also hears, by the way, lots of indifference. In a country where half of the electorate doesn't ordinarily care to vote, such an attitude might help Reagan enormously. Will the poor or so-called "working-class" people of this country turn out in large numbers this November in enthusiastic support of the president's economic policies? Many voters may not "come around" at all.

I think a substantial number of liberals and intellectuals, and especially the eastern kind, seriously underestimate and misjudge Governor Reagan. They have a hard time understanding the reasons for his appeal, which right now seems to be growing considerably, and is *not* confined to a small minority of rich,

drawing by Tom Meyer

right-wing zealots and those who want to ape them. His age is not the problem some would like to think. In many homes I have felt his age an advantage: he is the older person who has seen a lot, and isn't going to be surprised by very much. He comes across at least to the people I'm referring to here—Democrats, once upon a time—as friendly yet serious, a genial yet determined man, as honest as one could wish, and not least, as one who has been proved correct (so the president himself seems to be saying) on all the major questions the nation now faces. He was twice governor of the nation's most populous state, and there was no great sense that he had left a disaster behind when he left office. Somewhat bitterly, a hospital laboratory technician who has lived all his life in Oakland, California, stated the case: "What is the president telling us? He's telling us what Reagan kept telling us when he was governor—that you have to cut the fat out of government, and balance the budget, and keep it that way; and you have to be strong, or the Russians will walk all over you, and that's what they're starting to do, and everyone else, too, it seems like. So why should I vote for the guy who's just discovering what the other guy has known for years and years? Why not the best?"

He used those four words with a devastating, unwitting irony he only later acknowledged: "I forgot; I didn't remember the president used to say that—it's just something you think of when you hear a man trying to imitate the other side, and you say to yourself, he's in a mess, and he practically admits it, so why not

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get the guy who has come out smart on all these troubles, and wouldn't hesitate all over the place, and wouldn't have to go on television and tell you he's been wrong, but promise to change? Now we hear of more mistakes—a lot of running around here and there, I'd say, but no real direction. The poor guy, he seems swamped."

I suppose the best comfort for White House Democrats is going to be the memory of Harry Truman, that old favorite of everyone these days, and of Barry Goldwater. But Harry Truman was exceedingly unpopular for reasons that are not exactly similar to those that account for present White House occupant's distinctly uncertain hold on the electorate. Harry Truman fought doggedly on behalf of his Fair Deal. He was for national health insurance back in the 1940s. No matter how intense the criticism, he stood his ground. He didn't go chasing after public opinion; he didn't adjust his positions to suit critics or the prevailing voter sentiment as measured by pollsters. When he campaigned for himself, against apparently hopeless odds and with a split party to boot, he was something no media consultant or advertising executive or image-maker needed to tinker with; he was *himself*. Eventually, as he made clear, he reminded people not only what Roosevelt and the Democratic party meant to them, but what he, Harry S. Truman, had fought hard in order to mean to them. Those people listened and said yes, that's right, and yes, he deserves to stay where he is.

Can the present Democratic incumbent pull that off? Using what consistent advocacy, policies, positions? This question need not be asked with animus or polemically. It is the kind of question that voters will be asking themselves, and more than likely, will be asked to ponder by Mr. Reagan. And Reagan surely will remind voters that the State of the Union speech in January 1980 came across, significantly, as something that might have been written by none other than Ronald Reagan. Of course, prodded by sincere conviction and/or realpolitik (and boosted, perhaps, by such outstanding agrarian populists as Clark Clifford, Lloyd Cutler, Hedley Donovan, and Robert Strauss) there could be a sharp turn to the left, a legitimate effort to emphasize the distinctions between a conservative Republican presidency and the one we now have—with respect, for example, to various future judicial appointments, and so on. But the people are not quite undiscerning. They've been "educated" from so many quarters, for so many recent years, to believe that liberalism is bankrupt, that a sudden attempt to paint Reagan into a reactionary corner may not be so easily managed.

In the summer of 1976, the Democratic nominee for president gave a wonderfully rousing speech, worthy of the description "populist" in its best historical sense. It has been downhill ever since. Would Truman have folded so fast? One never knows. The times are different. But for *not* folding, Truman got hell from the same kinds of people who scolded this president as soon as he used the words "big shot" publicly. And it won't quite do to summon in justification the theology of Reinhold Niebuhr, who was for years a socialist pastor, and even a political candidate in a Detroit (during the Depression years) dominated by Henry Ford's thugs, and who knew well how to stake out unpopular territory, and by God, stand fast.

I suppose this is as good a moment as any to apologize to the readers of this magazine for the exceedingly, fatuously wrong characterization of "populist" made by me in these pages during the primary season four years ago, when we were all trying to figure out who "he" was. He was, he is, I reckon, a decent, intelligent, sensitive, thoughtful southern moderate, with carefully modulated progressive instincts. Surely he never has been a fighting populist, and it's a pity he seems uninterested in waging that kind of national campaign. There are other explanations than those of Arthur Burns, Paul Volcker, Textron's G. William Miller, and Milton Friedman and his wife to account for the forces that bring about inflation in advanced capitalist societies; there are other standards than theirs by which we might judge exactly whose belt ought be tightened, and why; we crave a Jonathan Swift, or an H. L. Mencken, not to mention a president who would at least acknowledge the bitter irony that has so many of us waiting and praying hard for a recession, the bigger the better (and during it let "them," the poor, eat their cake). Inevitably, these days, the Bible will be summoned; a deeply Christian leader will be reminded of Christ's various admonitions: His never-ending concern for the poor, the vulnerable; His willingness to take on, at whatever personal cost, various "principalities and powers." All right, to use the obvious: "For what profiteth a man if he gaineth the whole world and loseth . . ."—well, not so much his soul (who of us is to judge?) as a damn good chance to spell out to the American people a few things about commodities speculators, gold and silver speculators, land speculators, lobbyists, conglomerates, some banks and oil companies, and on and on.

In any event, Ronald Reagan will not be readily depicted as dangerous or unstable or quick to panic and push us to Armageddon through pressure on a nuclear button—not when we're all being told that we need more and more such buttons, and a lot of associated military hardware, to face down what the president himself has described as a considerably underestimated military threat. Draft registration, the spectacle of the modest, contained Zbigniew Brzezinski peering from Pakistan at the vast and elusive mysteries of Afghanistan, a State of the Union speech that had Sam Nunn smiling and Russell Long (in many ways, because of the power he holds over the budget and given the nature of contemporary Washington politics, de facto president of the United States) and dozens of Republicans saying yes, it's about time—those are not the likely ingredients of a campaign that will convince

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Americans that Reagan is a reactionary or a hawk who will get us into a war. Nor does this president, surely, have what Lyndon Johnson had to offer the country in 1964—all those Great Society programs, another southerner's daring legacy of social compassion.

But the president has decided, so far, to stay in the White House. And he has decided to propose an agenda that "pre-empts" Republican positions. There is no reason for him to do otherwise, the savvy ones tell us. He's been winning by being presidential, the voluble, confiding Strauss tells us. He'll win in November by undercutting the potential critique of a Reagan, and by portraying him as old, as inexperienced, as a vacant-headed movie performer, even as dangerous. Meanwhile, it begins to look as though the president may, after all, have to leave the White House; may have to campaign openly or with increasingly thin disguises. And meanwhile, given what comes across as an apparent agreement these days about what the country needs at home and abroad, at least on the part of the leading Democratic and Republican candidates, there is that potential autumnal question: why not the best?

Is incompetence the mother of success?

The Great Carter Mystery

(continued from front cover)

for reelection. Have we turned into a nation of masochists? Has our noble land fallen under some malign curse?

There are simpler explanations. In an irony not unknown to historians, Carter's very incompetence has been his salvation. He owes his resurrection to two international crises—Iran and Afghanistan—that he himself helped bring about.

The first crisis was surely one of the most needless in American history. British diplomats in Tehran had warned their government that the admission of the shah to the United Kingdom would provoke retaliation. The British government heeded those warnings. Carter received the same warnings from American diplomats—and rejected them. A specialist in tropical medicine employed by the Rockefeller interests claimed that the shah's life could be saved only by emergency treatment in New York. Carter, so far as one knows, did not even do what secretaries of Health, Education, and Welfare tell us should be routine in all surgery cases: ask for a second opinion. He let in the shah, and the Iranians, as predicted, stormed the American embassy. The medical pretext was quickly disproved when a Canadian doctor flew to New York from British Columbia to perform the critical operation. Even the good gray *New York Times* recently said, "The more we learn about the ailments of the deposed Shah of Iran, the more likely it seems that his health did not require him to come to the United States after all." If Carter had made intelligent decisions, the shah probably would still be undisturbed in Cuernavaca; the Canadian doctor would have flown to Mexico City rather than to New York City to remove the royal gallstones; and our diplomats would be going about their business as usual in Tehran.

Nonetheless, the national indignation over the appalling Iranian action fed the genial but dopey American instinct to rally behind presidents in moments of adversity. People postponed inconvenient questions as to how we got into the fix. Carter's popularity soared. I could not but recall sitting in President Kennedy's office a few days after the Bay of Pigs. A secretary brought in an advance on a new Gallup poll. As he read it, an expression of intense disgust came over Kennedy's face. He threw it across his desk to me and said, "Take a look at that. The worse I do, the more popular I become."

Then, as Carter's free ride over the hostages was coming to an end, Moscow obliged with a new crisis: the invasion of Afghanistan. This brutal action too may be persuasively, if less directly, traced to Carter's prior bungling. Last summer the administration had blundered into the great "pseudo-crisis," as Senator Robert Byrd accurately termed it, over the Soviet brigade in Cuba. The brigade turned out to have been there since 1962; but Carter feebly permitted its presence to be defined as a mortal threat to the republic. Then, having grandly declared that the status quo was unacceptable, he went on to accept it. This capacity for tergiversation may well have convinced the Kremlin that Carter's readiness to accept the unacceptable was unlimited. The Cuban pseudo-crisis also prevented the

Arthur Schlesinger Jr. is currently at work on the fourth volume of *The Age of Roosevelt.*

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SALT II treaty from coming up for a vote last fall, when it still might have been ratified; had it been in place, the Russians might have thought twice about invading Afghanistan; and, with SALT dead, they evidently figured they had nothing to lose by plunging ahead.

They plunged ahead, not, as Carter seemed to think, to gain Afghanistan, which they supposed they had gained two years ago in the pro-Soviet coup of April 1978, but to save the pro-Soviet government in Kabul from the Moslem insurgency and to prevent the establishment of a hostile regime on their southern frontier. Doubtless the Soviet government, like other governments at other times, feared to lose "credibility" if it failed to bail out a friend in distress.

How remote the brave days of Carter's response to Afghanistan now seem, 10 weeks later!—the American president crying that the scales at last had fallen from his eyes about Soviet intentions; calling the Russian action "a steppingstone to their possible control over much of the world's oil supplies"; discerning a Soviet master plan "to consolidate a strategic position . . . that poses a grave threat to the free movement of Middle East oil"; pronouncing this "the most serious threat to world peace since the Second World War"; going on, as no American spokesman has since John Foster Dulles, about "atheism" as an international menace; and, with full flourish of trumpets, promulgating the Carter Doctrine.

This doctrine seemingly committed the United States to repel "any attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region . . . by any means necessary, including military force." It was a moment of high machismo. But senators Jackson and McGovern asked whether the administration really thought the United States could foil a Soviet assault on the Persian Gulf area by military means short of nuclear war. Though this was the clear implication of Carter's original declaration, our president beat a hasty retreat. Soon he was volubly disclaiming any idea "that at this time or in the future we expect to have enough military strength . . . there to defend the region unilaterally."

If the Carter Doctrine could be enforced only with the aid of other states, a competent administration would have taken the elementary precaution to consult those other states before announcing the doctrine. It seems incredible, but the Carter administration had undertaken no such consultation. In the weeks since, the Persian Gulf states have made it abundantly clear that the last thing they want in present circumstances is an American expeditionary force in their midst. Carter even offered the Pakistanis $400 million in aid if they would only grant him the privilege of protecting them; they turned down the offer with contempt. The Carter Doctrine, in short, found little support among the countries it was intended to defend.

As for our European allies, Helmut Schmidt, Giscard d'Estaing, Lord Carrington have, with imperturbable courtesy, indicated their skepticism about the Carter theses—the Soviet master plan; the idea of fighting a conventional war in the Persian Gulf; the nonsense about the greatest world crisis since 1945 (subsequently reduced by Carter himself, when Schmidt visited Washington, to a "potential crisis"). They have hardly bothered to hide their dismay over Carter's charging ahead without discussing common interests or strategy, nor their frustration over the chronic waywardness and unpredictability of his reactions to world events. Their main doubt seems to be whether they are seeing a badly rattled president responding in an overwrought way to an outrageous but hardly uncharacteristic Soviet move; or an unscrupulous president exaggerating and exploiting international crises for domestic political benefit, at whatever cost to the interests of his allies. (This second thought evidently also has occurred in the Middle East, where, according to Mohammed Heikal, former editor of Cairo's *El Ahram*, "most people" believe American foreign policy these days is determined "by President Carter's tactical considerations in the presidential campaign.")

Certainly Carter's machismo hasn't helped the cause of peace. George Kennan may be unduly pessimistic; but he is, after all, an old hand in these matters, and, in his comments on Carter's overreaction to Afghanistan, Kennan observed that he could think of "no instance in modern history" where such a breakdown of communication and such a triumph of unrestrained military suspicion had not "led, in the end, to armed conflict." It does seem as if Carter hopes to ride a revived cold war into renomination and reelection. And no one can doubt the boost each new crisis has given him in the polls. For a time it seemed as if the ayatollah and Brezhnev were going to decide whom Americans would choose as their next president. They still may.

Carter's political managers meanwhile sought to convert every primary into a referendum on whether voters were patriots enough to back the president in a national emergency. Carter himself, in order to consolidate his immunity, embarked in February on the rather sinister course of criticizing those who disagreed publicly with his conduct of foreign policy, especially Senator Kennedy, for "damaging" the country. It required considerable nerve, after Vietnam and Watergate, to disparage the role of debate in a democracy and to revive the doctrine of presidential infallibility. Carter's attempt to silence Kennedy should have led to widespread protest. It did not. For a while Carter got away with it. The nation that had debated foreign policy without inhibition when Adolf Hitler stood at the Straits of Dover—a somewhat greater threat to American security, one supposes, than a few Russians standing in Kabul—now fell into the mood articulated by, of all people, Carl Rowan: "The President has said to me that this situation is more perilous than the Cuban missile crisis, and you want me to tell him he is wrong?" (*Washington Star*, January 26). In short, once the president gives the word, it is the duty

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of all loyal citizens to shut up and march. Come on, Carl! As Dean Acheson remarked to Harry Truman in 1960 regarding the idea that in foreign policy the country must always back the president, "This cliché has become a menace. . . . One might as well say 'Support the President,' if he falls off the end of a dock."

Carter's ineptitude in foreign policy has grown each year, thereby confounding the wistful hopes of those who thought he might learn on the job. 1980 has been his banner year for blunders; and what is finally destroying his immunity is less his confusion in grand strategy, impressive as this has been, than his incorrigible incompetence in detail. The mess over the vote on the UN resolution opposing Israel's settlement policy reminded Americans what a hopeless bungler their president is. Having succeeded in angering Israelis and Arabs equally, Carter then claimed not to have read the resolution and, lacking the decency to accept the blame himself, let faithful Cyrus Vance take the fall. It is still not clear, a month later, whether, apart from the Jerusalem references, the administration endorses or disavows the resolution.

This is only the most spectacular of a succession of idiocies, from the macho decision last year, with a presidential declaration of emergency in order to waive the requirement of congressional consent, to rush arms to North Yemen—a country that soon proved to be dealing under the table with the Russians—to those on-again, off-again sanctions on Iran, to Carter's recent press conference explanation of his latest impasse with France ("We did not communicate adequately," our president said; he never does), to his adoption of a meaningless draft registration plan against the recommendation of his own Selective Service director, to the flat White House denial that Carter had sent a message to Khomeini, when in fact he had. It is little wonder that no one in the world can take a Carter foreign policy move seriously, expecting, as they must, that it will be reversed, recalled, disputed, or forgotten in another week. Even newspapers and magazines that built Carter up over Iran and Afghanistan can no longer contain their concern: "Error and Crisis: A Foreign Policy Against the Ropes" (*Washington Post*, March 16); "Flip-Flops and Zig-Zags" (*Time*, March 17); "A U.S. Foreign Policy in Deep Disarray" (*New York Times*, March 21).

I do not underestimate the problems of conducting foreign relations in this agitated and equivocal world. But tactical zig-zags against a background of strategic purpose are one thing; tactical zig-zags backed up by strategic incoherence another. Carter has shown himself devoid of a consistent world view, incapable of conceiving or sticking by what Helmut Schmidt calls "a coherent sustainable western policy," and in consequence is buffeted hither and yon by emotional gusts of irritation, self-righteousness, and vainglory. Can the United States—can the world—afford four more years of this unsteady hand at the tiller?

There are, it may be said, only two reasons to shudder at the thought of four more years of Carter in the White House. One is foreign policy. The other is domestic policy. I began by recalling the economic consequences of President Carter. With his compulsion to dodge responsibility, Carter has tried to distance himself from inflation, high interest rates, looming recession, giving the impression that he, like the rest of us, is the victim of forces beyond human control. If prices were stable, interest rates low, and employment secure, one doubts that he would be so shy about accepting responsibility.

His economic policy, like his foreign policy, has been one of zig-zags and flip-flops. His goal, he said in 1976, was to reduce inflation to four percent by 1980. He was for standby controls in his campaign, but dumped them thereafter and proceeded to combat inflation by offering an economic stimulus package in 1977, a tax reduction package in 1978, and two separate budgets within six weeks in 1980. While recoiling from controls as if they were the handiwork of Satan, Carter at the same time favors voluntary guidelines, which, of course, are based on exactly the same economic theory as controls, the only difference being that guidelines, being voluntary, do not work, at least not without a good deal more personal presidential commitment than Carter ever gave them. "To the extent guidelines work," as *The New Republic* said recently ("Time For Controls?" *TNR*, February 3) "they create the same problems as controls; to the extent they avoid those problems, they don't work."

Carter underestimated inflation from the beginning. Nor has he to this day offered a coherent account of the reasons for inflation. On "Meet the Press" two days before the Iowa caucuses in January, in one of his few sallies from the Rose Garden sanctuary, he seized the bully pulpit to say: "All the increases for practical purposes of inflation rates since I have been in office have been directly attributable to increased OPEC oil prices." In other words, don't blame me, fellows. The only trouble with Carter's self-exculpation was that it was flagrantly false, as the White House had to confess a few days later. Of the 13.3 percent inflation in 1979, only 2.2 percent was directly attributable to OPEC price rises. Carter's alibi was not even plausible. The United States buys less than half its oil from OPEC. West Germany and Japan buy virtually all their oil from OPEC. Yet inflation in West Germany and Japan runs a third that in the United States. As Helmut Schmidt dryly remarked to the *Wall Street Journal* when asked about the OPEC-inflation thesis, "It is clear that there are additional factors as well." Was Carter simply ignorant in his answer to this fairly crucial question? Or did he suppose he could get away with thus misinforming the electorate?

In fact, Carter's own policy of decontrolling crude oil has contributed more than OPEC to American inflation. And, having been forced to abandon his OPEC alibi, Carter now has adopted the old Republican

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thesis: government deficits are the cause of inflation, and a balanced budget is the remedy. Actually, history reveals no predictable relationship between deficits and inflation. West Germany today is running a deficit nearly three times as large as ours in relation to gross national product—and has about one-fourth the inflation. President Kennedy, in his Yale University speech nearly 20 years ago, carefully explained why the idea that deficits caused inflation was a "myth." Carter's fourth anti-inflation program, founded on this myth, will have the same effect on prices as his first three anti-inflation programs, under which inflation has steadily risen from 4.8 to 18 percent.

The only way his program will restrain inflation in the longer run is by throwing the whole economy into a recession—an objective Carter is pursuing grimly with the collaboration of Paul Volcker, the severe if jovial monetarist whom Carter chose, out of 220 million Americans, as chairman of the Federal Reserve Board. Now it is true that the lamented Gerald Ford, by inducing the worst recession in 40 years, brought inflation down from 12 percent in 1975-76 (while, incidentally, running deficits of $112 billion). But it would take about twice as grinding an economic squeeze to bring inflation down from 18 or 20 percent. The burden of such a draconian policy would fall disastrously on the poor, the unemployed, and the cities. And the effect of recession on such underlying sources of inflation as declining productivity would be only to compound disaster.

The reason for Carter's horrible failure in economic policy is plain enough. On such matters he is not a Democrat—at least in anything more recent than the Grover Cleveland sense of the word. Let him speak for himself: "Government cannot solve our problems. It can't set the goals. It cannot define our vision. Government cannot eliminate poverty, or provide a bountiful economy, or reduce inflation, or save our cities, or cure illiteracy, or provide energy." No, children, this is not from a first draft of Ronald Reagan's inaugural address. It is from Jimmy Carter's second annual message to Congress. Can anyone imagine Franklin D. Roosevelt talking this way? If he had taken Carter's view of government, we still would be in the Great Depression. Can anyone imagine Harry Truman, John Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, Hubert Humphrey, or George McGovern uttering those words?

To take Carter's view of government is to deny the heritage of the modern Democratic party—the party that, with all its faults, has used government to humanize our industrial economy, establish the rights of labor, assure the livelihood of the farmer, combat poverty, defend the city, and strive for racial justice. To deny that heritage is to disarm us all in face of the great national problems. ("The Carter Administration has actually reduced the amount of Federal aid going to New York City"—Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan.) And to reject the role of government is to deliver the direction of national policy to powerful and greedy private interests.

When I debate advocates of the administration, they tend, unable to defend Carter's record, to say that he should be reelected anyway because he is a "good and decent man." No doubt a congenital distrust of people who wear piety on their sleeve disqualifies me as an observer of those who like to tell the world how regularly they commune with the Almighty. But, pray five times a day as Carter may, he remains a smiler with a knife. No president has used the resources of incumbency with such a cynical aplomb to punish insurrection in the ranks—not Gerald Ford confronted by Ronald Reagan in 1976, not even the ferocious Lyndon Johnson confronted by Eugene McCarthy and Robert Kennedy in 1968. This is another factor in Carter's political comeback.

Can this miracle of levitation last? The Democratic presidents of this century, up to Carter, all communicated a sense of the direction in which they wanted to move the country. Carter seems to have no vision of America at all. "There is every sign," he told Congress on January 23, 1979, "that the state of our union is sound." Six months later, he suddenly discovered "a crisis that strikes at the very heart, soul and spirit of our national will . . . threatening to destroy the social and political fabric of America. . . . These changes did not happen overnight." As usual, he was blaming someone else—this time the entire American people—for the failures of his presidency. This was the speech after his famous Camp David conclave when he summoned 130 American worthies to provide him with the vision he could not find within himself.

"Carter believes fifty things," James Fallows, his first presidential speechwriter, has testified, "but no one thing. He holds explicit, thorough positions on every issue under the sun, but he has no large view of the relations between them, no line indicating which goal . . . will take precedence over which . . . when goals conflict. Spelling out these choices makes the difference between a position and a philosophy, but it is an act foreign to Carter's mind." Lacking any central vision, the Carter administration is alone among Democratic administrations of this century in failing to earn a popular label (New Freedom, New Deal, Fair Deal, New Frontier, Great Society), the effort to launch "New Foundation" proving a dismal and predestined flop. Lacking any central vision, Carter cannot impart consistency and coherence to his policies, whether at home or in the world.

And yet he is today the odds-on favorite for renomination and reelection. Reelect Jimmy Carter? Four more years for a president "whose record of ineptitude" (I quote Tom Wicker) "stands unmatched since Warren G. Harding, and whose campaign is based on foreign policy crises largely of his own making"? Someone must be kidding.

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1 Talks with the NPA—a consumer coalition of over 100 inner-city neighborhood groups—led to a three-fold test program now underway in sections of Chicago, Cleveland, New York, and Philadelphia. We're encouraging agents there to help us write more homeowner's insurance. In two of these cities, we're offering a new "Home Value Policy" that makes inner-city insurance affordable. And we've put up a $225,000 grant to help reclaim rundown areas, backed by a commitment of up to $15 million in higher-risk urban development loans.

2 The hotline is just the most recent expression of our long-standing concern. If you want to know what information we have about you on file, just ask. If you tell us something's wrong, we'll reinvestigate and respond. As to Æconomaster, it not only offers lower premiums to start with, it can lower them even further when interest rates go up—a hedge against inflation.

3 Our studies so far show that about half of you think the traditional rating criteria are unfair. When told that new criteria could mean more money out of your pocket, however, only about a third still thought change was a good idea. In the real world, decisions often involve some tradeoff between costs and benefits. What we have here are two problems to solve at once.

4 Ætna recognizes we've helped fuel rising costs by selling health insurance that doesn't always give the consumer a reason to be concerned about them. Deductibles and co-insurance while effective aren't always popular. Unfortunately we too often give the customer what he wants without looking at the tradeoffs. We also haven't done enough to educate people to take better care of themselves or know when they're sick. Prevention is still cheaper than treatment.

5 It's now company policy to invite representatives from groups like the National Consumers' League up to Hartford. And Ætna now has 21 of its own consumer representatives who respond to your questions, suggestions, and complaints—somewhat unusual for an industry that's spent the last hundred years mostly listening to itself.

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Books and the Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on films

Lots of Love

Cousin, Cousine, a recent hit, was a pleasant fib—too innocuous to be called a lie. What interested me most about it was that it fit into a tradition: people knew it was a fib and liked it anyway. (One 40-ish woman said to another as they exited in front of me, "Boy, if only it were like that.") It's no news that film audiences want fantasy about daily life as much as about outer space; and *Cousin, Cousine* not only made extramarital affairs logistically convenient, physically marvelous, and socially admired, it set them in the Neverland where such things *should* happen—fictitious France. (Compare *Cousin, Cousine* with any Colette novel, which shouldn't take long, and see the difference between Frenchiness and real sex/love in real France.)

Now the same director, Jean Charles Tacchella, presents *Soupçon*, which was produced in France by two young Americans, Roy Durham and Jeffie Pike; and the fantasy-fabricating goes on, but more subtly and more pleasantly. The added seeming-credibility this time comes because the central couple are older, and the cramps and aches of various kinds, particularly the man's, varnish everything with *verismo*. This time a couple, celebrating their 25th wedding anniversary with their children and grandchildren, use the occasion to announce that they are splitting up. No quarrels, no hatred: Ma and Pa just feel they've had all they can get from their marriage and now want to live separate lives. They were married quite young, and Ma is now only in her 40s, Pa a bit older.

In the weeks that follow, the children try sagaciously to reunite their parents but eventually see that reunion is really not wanted. The father and the mother have their own series of adventures, mostly sexual—amusing, touching, possible if not overwhelmingly probable. All is handled gently by Tacchella in the mode of gentle conspiracy against fact that began in French film with René Clair. And, in keeping with traditional male self-debasement before women—which is one form of male egotism that feminism has not yet shaken—we see the father having self-doubts and sexual problems while the mother has her pick of young men and never a tremor in her wisdom.

Soupçon (a meaningless title: it was originally called *It's a Long Time I've Loved You*) brings up again one of the sweet-sad uses of film—as calendar. A few weeks ago in a film class I showed Truffaut's *Shoot the Piano Player* (1962) in which Marie Dubois plays the bar girl who loves Charles Aznavour and gets killed for it. Here she is the mother, first seen with severe hair-do and glasses. She gave me the feeling I often have from seeing people in films after a lapse of some years: if I met her, I would expect her to recognize me even though I, too, have changed.

But I was puzzled by the clothes she was given and the differing hair-styles. She runs a boutique, not high-fashion still with some style. Her own appearance often suggests lower-middle-class desperate chic, not consonant with her job or her apartment.

The father is Jean Carmet who may be remembered as the girl's father in Chabrol's *Violette* but alas will not be remembered as the girl's father in Pascal Thomas's delightful *Don't Cry with Your Mouth Full*, which found no public. Carmet is a small neat man without great power or powerful reticence but with appeal and the effortless ability to "behave" credibly. One of the film's sharpest moments is in the bedroom of a girl he has just picked up in a café. She is naked in bed, waiting for him, when he scents delicious cooking through an open window, and this 50-ish man strikes up a conversation about food with the woman in the kitchen across the way while the naked girl waits. Carmet handles it with perfect logic.

Soupçon is a cozy confection. But the latter-day French films of Romy Schneider make me think of the 20-year-old joke about Dinah Shore: "My doctor says I have diabetes so I have to stop watching the Dinah Shore Show." And now we get two Schneider *Schnitten* in a row.

The first, *A Simple Story*, was directed by another sometimes successful pastrycook, Claude Sautet (*Vincent, François, Paul and the Others*). It's another of those ostensibly modern Women-Now pictures, like Moreau's *Lumière*, that are really updated versions of old-fashioned weepies, Joan-Crawford-as-suffering-goddess films. Schneider cuddles babies, cooks, bites the end off a baguette to show earthy appetite, comforts women, understands men—the script has her do everything but find a cure for cancer and simultaneously swim the English Channel. And to have to watch that smug dolly-face loving itself the whole time. . . .

But that was better than it is to watch and hear her in Costa-Gavras's new film *Clair de Femme*, which lends new flatulence to the term "sententious." The script, adapted by the director from a novel by Romain Gary, is one of those a-life-in-a-day jobs, full of weighty resonance. Yves Montand is at the Paris airport, but instead of getting on his

Films Worth Seeing

Best Boy. Ira Wohl's unexploitative good documentary about his mentally retarded cousin of 52. But the cousin's quiet, lovely mother is really the center.

The Left-Handed Woman. Peter Handke directed his own screenplay (written before his novel) about a woman's respite from the world and probable return. Edith Clever. Crystalline.

The Trials of Alger Hiss. John Lowenthal's 166-minute documentary tries to be objective. Newsreels interwoven with recent interviews. Well done, intelligently worrisome.

Our Hitler. Not a documentary. Hans-Jürgen Syberberg's seven hours of film poems seem to say: "I can't sleep. These are my nightmares about Germany, the world, the future." Immense, plainly flawed, powerful.

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plane to a distant place, he suddenly takes a taxi back to the city and, accidentally, encounters Schneider. After some to-ing and fro-ing, full of unpregnant pauses, they get together, and it comes out that his wife killed herself the night before and the body has not yet been discovered: that Schneider's husband and child were killed in a car crash six months before (only there's a surprise about that). So these two stricken souls move to each other through strophes of shared agony—it is hoped. Not only that, there's a symbolic vaudeville performer who weaves through it all, the owner of an animal act. All three of them discourse in gnomic dialogue. If there were a Chinese restaurant on Parnassus, its fortune cookies would contain such aphorisms.

This exhausting film is particularly depressing because of Costa-Gavras's direction. He is still sympathetic with Montand, who has been in three previous films for him, *Z*, *The Confession*, and *State of Siege*: moments in Montand's performance actually approach legitimacy. But in his political films Costa-Gavras found an apposite style—of camera motion, of astringent editing—that was both corollary to the theme and responsive to his ideas about it. Here, outside of those few Montand moments, he flounders around in conventionalities of romantic direction; and is, apparently, unable to reach the autotelic Schneider.

Hide in Plain Sight is James Caan's first try at directing (while he stars), and it shows yet again that anyone who has been around films a bit, who can afford a good cinematographer (Paul Lohmann) and good editors (Fredric and William Steinkamp), can get a story onto film. Caan's idea of an opening shot is not exactly original—an overhead shot, outdoors, moving down slowly on a crane to pick out some individuals (Wise's *West Side Story* and Hitchcock's *Frenzy* are only two previous examples), and the picture doesn't get any more original after that; but in a pedestrian way the film is, mostly, adequately put together.

The script, by Spencer Eastman, is not. It's based on the true story of a Buffalo factory worker whose divorced wife marries a mobster. The mobster gives evidence for the prosecution in a trial, and as part of the deal he and his wife and his wife's children—the worker's children—are secretly relocated by the Department of Justice. The worker fights that secrecy to find his kids.

It may sound dramatic but it isn't, because the bulk of the story is the worker (Caan) going to offices, being shuffled off, waiting, going to more offices, waiting and stewing. The filmmakers evidently were so worried about this that they cut to the climax without explaining how Caan or the mob's hit man got to his family's hideout.

Also it's hard to believe that the agreeable Jill Eikenberry, as a schoolteacher, falls in love with Caan, whose dialogue and deportment and friends verge on the moronic. *The Deer Hunter* attempted to dramatize its working-class atmosphere: Caan's film just lolls in it, lazily, exploitatively.

To heal the time.

The European Writers in Exile

by Alfred Kazin

Sigmund Freud. Thomas Mann. James Joyce. Samuel Beckett. Bertolt Brecht. Vladimir Nabokov. Erich Auerbach. Ernst Cassirer. Claude Lévi-Strauss. Maurice Maeterlinck. Jules Romains. Georges Bernanos. Jacques Maritain. Erwin Panofsky. Karl Wolfskehl. Elsie Lasker-Schuler. Paul Tillich. Américo Castro. Hermann Broch. André Breton. Erik Erikson. Franz Werfel. Elias Canetti. Sigrid Undset. Robert Musil. Oskar Maria Graf. André Maurois. St. John Perse. Arthur Koestler. Renato Poggioli. Erich Maria Remarque. Wilhelm Reich. Hannah Arendt. Erich Heller. Herbert Marcuse. Nelly Sachs. Michael Polanyi.

These at least made their way to safety. But Ernst Toller, dead by his own hand in New York; Kurt Tucholsky in Sweden; Stefan Zweig in Brazil; Walter Benjamin after being turned back on the French-Spanish frontier; Egon Friedell in Vienna; Paul Celan in Paris . . . Theodore Lessing, murdered in Prague as he sat at his desk; Erich Mühsam, tortured to death in Oranienburg; Anne Frank, 15 when she died in Belsen; Simon Dubnow, author of the greatest history in Russian of the Jews, 84 years old when he was shot to death in the Riga ghetto. Max Jacob died in Drancy, Simone Weil in London of malnutrition induced by her solidarity with the occupied French. We do not know just how many writers in Yiddish, Hebrew, Russian, Lithuanian, Latvian, Polish died in the gas chambers. We do not know the fate of those gifted young children who were smuggled out of the Vilna ghetto so that they at least could continue the story of their people.

To discuss the particular talents that made it to America, to our and the world's good fortune—Mann, Brecht, Nabokov, Arendt, Auerbach, Maritain—is to recall not only the many who did not but the unequal contest between the individual talent and murderous totalitarianism. To have been of age during the Hitler period is to be stamped forever with the image of an unlimited destructiveness that now seems no less grotesque for being so suicidal. Yet just now I prefer to think of a German philosopher someone told me of. He guarded his family in an Amsterdam attic near where the Otto Frank family was betrayed. With a rifle on his knees day after day he wrote a philosophical treatise—and lived to publish it. I think of Thomas Mann, in Princeton and in Pacific Palisades, completing the great Joseph tetralogy and going on to write *Dr. Faustus*; of Erich Auerbach, for me the greatest of modern literary scholars, writing his magisterial study of representation, *Mimesis*. Auerbach was grateful that the Turkish libraries were so poor; he was not distracted by secondary literature. Simone Weil, first on Riverside Drive in New York, then in London, was working out that extraordinary personal theology, *L'Attente de Dieu, La Connaissance Surnaturelle*, that was to have such a marked effect on T. S. Eliot and so many English, French, and American intellectuals. Sigmund Freud was in London, stoically enduring the pain of cancer in his jaw, for which he would not take even aspirin lest it diminish the lucidity with which, at 83, he was still seeing patients and rewriting *Moses and Monotheism*. Describing himself

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as "an island of pain in a sea of indifference," he was to die just as Hitler unleashed his war.

The most gifted of Russian writers in exile, Vladimir Nabokov, while still in Paris, had begun to write his first novel in English, *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*. He wrote it in the bathroom of a tiny flat so as not to disturb his infant son Dmitri. When the Nazis overran France in 1940, Nabokov had to save his Jewish wife; he was able to get on one of the last ships to America thanks to a Jewish rescue service that gratefully remembered the support given to persecuted Jews under czarism by Nabokov's father, an aristocratic liberal whose real legacy to his gifted son was the Russian democratic tradition. Nabokov in America was bitterly to complain to his good friend and sponsor Edmund Wilson that American intellectuals seemed to know nothing of this tradition, thoughtlessly disseminated the Leninist lie that Russian exiles were all "white guards." No other writer in exile was to make such brilliant use of the English language and the American scene.

Hannah Arendt, who had taken her doctorate at Heidelberg under Karl Jaspers with a famous thesis on St. Augustine's concept of love, was on West 95th Street in New York, struggling with her adopted English to write *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Herbert Marcuse of the Frankfurt Institute of Social Research, headed by Max Horkheimer and T. W. Adorno, was soon to mix Freud and Marx into a cumbersome potion that would be swallowed easily, especially in California, by young American Ishmaels looking for a Captain Ahab to direct their life voyage. Wilhelm Reich, a left-winger amid conservative Freudians, a determined radical visionary who extended Freud's dictum of sexual repression from a bourgeois 19th-century problem into the 20th-century malady that explained the proliferation of all disease, even fascism, was to find a small fanatical audience here for his apocalyptic vision. The orgone energy at large in the universe was not being sufficiently absorbed by traumatized slaves of a sexual inhibition programmed by capitalism's work ethic.

Freud said that intelligence is weak but persistent. These writers were weak and vulnerable, struggling with new countries, new customs, often enough a difficult new language to write in, but they were persistent. A common theme in the face of Nazi destructiveness was history as the human memory, our common past, the human labyrinth. Think of Freud's insistence that our past is always within us, of Thomas Mann's concern in the Joseph novels with what he called the deep well of the past, of the Greek polis as the background of Hannah Arendt's political philosophy, of the way in which tradition and the break with tradition haunted Nabokov and Lévi-Strauss no less than the Germans. An irony of the fascist age was its war against people who above all else believed in continuity—and so were never as death-fascinated as their tormenters were.

Continuity means not just the past but the past behind the past we think we know. The real drama of European exiled writers in America—I limit myself to Mann and Arendt—is the contrast between their instinctive European sense of history and the optimistic American belief—should I call it the old American optimism?—that the future is as real as the present. Only a great European poet, Rilke, could have defined poetry as "the past that breaks out in our hearts." Huck Finn, on learning that the Bible story he was forced to learn dealt with characters dead a powerful long time ago, said that he took no stock in dead people. Americans, especially of recent immigrant vintage, thought of the past as a mistake. The America that began to rearm in 1940, miraculously recovered from the Depression, had a bounce, a new faith in progress as its destiny, that contrasted with the exhaustion and fearfulness of many exiles.

In any event, severe German intellectuals like Thomas Mann and Hannah Arendt had to acquire a taste for America. Mann, somehow protected from many disorderly things in the new world by his outward propriety, gave the impression in Princeton and Pacific Palisades, 1938-53, of being as rigid as Gustav von Aschenbach on his arrival in Venice. This may just have been his favorite disguise; Mann liked to think of himself as anti-bourgeois, a literary subversive, a mischievous satirist who just happened to look like a German field marshal with a taste for reading.

The great work of Mann's life, *Joseph and his Brothers*, was appropriately begun the year Hitler came to power, 1933, and was completed in 1942. The novel owes more than we will ever know to an exile like the biblical Joseph's, and to Joseph's wayward, mischievous family loyalty rather than religious loyalty to the monotheism which his father Jacob represents as the last of the patriarchs and the wrestler with God to whom God gave the name Israel. At the end of *Joseph the Provider*, when after more than a thousand pages Joseph is united with the father who never ceased to mourn his favorite son, "the son of the promise," Jacob nevertheless reminds Joseph that the latter's success has been worldly; it is not a part of the spiritual epic begun by Abraham.

So one can say of Mann's achievement, incomparable in its modern rendering of the biblical story, that it triumphs as story because it is detached. Although there is something symbolic in Mann's spending so many of the Hitler years writing his book, Mann did not consciously write it as an act of participation and sympathy. He stands outside the Bible's claim to revelation and the religious destiny of mankind; he is preoccupied, literally and almost dreamingly, with the biblical world as a storybook, a mythical coat of many colors. Did all that actually exist? If any of it did, how can we reach it? History may be the greatest fiction; and thus an invitation to write fiction that weaves speculation, legend, and the prototypes within our own minds.

What his God was to Jacob—the mysterious, unspeaking but audible force of destiny, the mystery of mysteries because He is One yet his works are forever contradictory—the most ancient world is to Mann the storyteller, who works here as a sorter out of myths, creating his story by examining and eluding one myth after another. There is a pattern here, but what is it? The "ironic German," as the critic Erich Heller has called Mann, is not likely to believe that his characters are as God-appointed as they say they are. Jacob, Esau, Laban, Leah, Rachel, Joseph, Benjamin, Reuben become more real to us than ourselves, as is required in a great novel. But to wonder what they are, with all their exaltations, jealousies, sufferings, and wanderings up and down that hot desert—this is to make us wanderers ourselves. Early in the first volume, *Tales of Jacob*, Mann likens himself to Jacob the wanderer, who preferred to dwell in tents. "As for me," he writes at the close of his wonderful opening meditation on the pastness of the past,

> I will not conceal my native and comprehensive understanding of the old man's restless unease and dislike of any fixed habitation. For do I not know the feeling? To me too has not unrest been ordained, have not I too been endowed with a heart which knoweth not repose. . . ? For the storyteller makes many

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> a station, . . . pauses only tent-wise, awaiting further directions, and soon feels heart beating high, . . . a sign that he must take the road, toward fresh adventures which are to be painstakingly lived through, down to their remotest details, according to the restless spirit's will.

Mann surely owed this to his inner homelessness in America. Nabokov came here in 1940 prepared to write in English, to teach in America, to learn all he could from America; he certainly got the native scene down cold in *Lolita*, *Pnin*, *Pale Fire*. But of course Nabokov was unknown and had to make his way; Mann, 63 when he arrived, was not without a German sense of his own importance. His publisher Alfred Knopf may have called him Tommy, but I am sure no one else would have thought of it. Mann was an American citizen when he returned to Switzerland in 1953 by way of East Germany; he disappointed many of his admirers by responding more pessimistically to American disorder during the McCarthy madness than to older traditions of liberty that he never really absorbed.

Yet *Joseph and His Brothers*, and of course *Doctor Faustus*, came out of Mann's intellectual alienation from America as well as his unrealizable hopes for Germany. It is not necessary for a great artist to be at home in exile, perhaps just the contrary. Adroit and even devilish in his quick use of parody of the American scene, Nabokov already had been twice exiled—from Russia and Germany—before he came here from France. Nabokov's fiction, especially in English, is relativistic, duplicitous in technique, devoted to protagonists driven by *idées fixes*. It was easier for Nabokov than for Mann to get absorbed in America; his sense of the comic and the perverse, plus his need to show off all he learned from a language and culture not his own, fed on America. And he too ended up in Switzerland!

Mann's unweaving the Bible into a modern novel somehow depended on his ability to live in Princeton and Hollywood without quite taking in the sounds around him. Henry Kissinger's brother, asked why he spoke without an accent, is reported to have said—"*I* played with the boys on the block." This may not be the way to ultimate success.

In *Joseph and His Brothers* it is not only Joseph who is in exile, but by extension, his lonely God-intoxicated father. The Hebrew God Himself, we learn in two extraordinary passages, is notoriously jealous because He is alone, having promised Himself to this one family. Only Mann, with his knowing humor at the expense of self-importance, has developed—perhaps from some old Jewish legend—a long-buried fact in the story of Potiphar's wife, who is mad for Joseph: Potiphar is a court eunuch. When Mann's Joseph learns this, he reflects that Potiphar must be lonely, as lonely as God. "Yes, God too, the Lord, was lonely in His greatness; and Joseph's blood and his memory spoke in the realization that the isolation of a wifeless and childless God had much to do with the jealousy of the bond He had made with man." Later Joseph astonishingly says to Potiphar—"Our God has dedicated Himself to us, and is our blood-bridegroom in all jealousy, for He is solitary and on fire for our loyalty. And we for our part are the bride of His loyalty, consecrate and set apart."

No Jewish writer coming out of the terrible years, whether as victim or survivor, could have described the Hebrew God with such mischief. The destruction, to use a term more fitting than the outworn and unprovoking term Holocaust, sent many baptized

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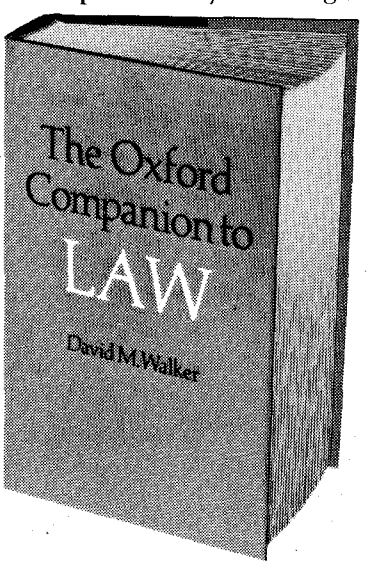

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Jews, like Arnold Schoenberg, back to their Old Testament God. In the immense loneliness of Jewish history, there has often been no one else to turn to.

Like most modern Jewish thinkers, but more especially German Jewish thinkers, Hannah Arendt was more influenced by Christianity than by Jewish tradition. Her first work had been on St. Augustine; she and Hans Jonas, who was to become the great authority on the Gnostics, were the only Jews in Bultmann's famous New Testament seminar at Marburg. Arendt was also profoundly indebted to the classical tradition. Her first book in English, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951) was based on unfashionable perspectives. In the face of all the usual left- and ex-left-wing illusions about communism, she believed that totalitarianism was the same everywhere if it meant absolute one-party rule; this was still too shocking for students of nazism in the early 1950s. In Franco's Spain there remained power centers not entirely creatures of the state, so there was not the total kind of domination that in the last and best chapters of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* she ascribed to the Nazi and Leninist police systems: she convincingly demonstrated their fatal resemblance.

The Origins of Totalitarianism began with the so-called Jewish problem and its relation to the German catastrophe. Unlike so many exiled writers, Arendt faced this "problem" directly. She had never been a radical even during the Weimar period, and was not under the illusion, familiar in Marxist literature from Marx to Isaac Deutscher, that the so-called Jewish problem is merely a reflection of social and economic tensions. On the other hand, Arendt did not comprehend from within the extent to which the Jewish masses of Eastern Europe, faithful to their religion, had no problem; just enemies. Kafka, Arendt's favorite 20th-century writer in German, a writer whose superiority to Thomas Mann was with her an article of faith, was willing to suffer his Jewishness but not to accept it. Arendt was religious in a very private sense. Her emerging political philosophy, drawn from a host of classical authorities, Montesquieu, de Tocqueville, John Adams, and other conservatives, came down to a vision of the Greek polis as the great political condition and to the rootlessness of the individual, the incessant struggle of politics, as symbols of some underlying modern disorder.

She was indeed very theoretical. Even her acquired taste for republican liberty rather than social meliorism reflected her basic conditioning in the profound sense of the self at the heart of German Protestantism and German philosophy. Her constant maxim was "we must think what we are doing." Emerson, who as his admirer Nietzsche said had only one fault: he had been too much influenced by German philosophy, characteristically said that to think is to be free. That was Hannah Arendt's profession of faith, her life, her example to many American writers who learned from her that there was indeed another Germany.

Hannah Arendt became a remarkably vivid figure at Berkeley, Chicago, Columbia, as the first woman professor at Princeton, at the New School For Social Research. She seemed not another scholar-in-exile but such a personality as only America can make out of a European inheritance and a mind not just gifted but fearless. What America did for her was to give her still another intellectual loyalty and an audience even more literary than it was scholarly. Writers responded to her, and she to writers, in a way that professional scholars never could. She would not have been altogether pleased to register the fact that she was actually more of a writer than a philosopher and historian. She set great store by her philosophical training, her long relationship with Karl Jaspers, ambitious treatises like *The Human Condition* (1958) and her last unfinished three-volume work, *The Life of the Mind* (1978). Only a writer would have been sent by the *New Yorker* to cover the Eichmann trial, and only a writer would have tossed off the fatal phrase "the banality of evil."

Hannah Arendt was a great moralist. She held very firm views on what the condemned Jews should have done in the face of the Hitler terror. One reason *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1963) disturbed many people was its unrecognized German *Egoismus*, from the sidelines of philosophy, at the expense of people who were not in a condition to "think" freely. Although she disparaged the historic tendency of German intellectuals to live above the battle, and professed admiration for the opposite trait in American intellectual life, in the end she could not avoid the noble German trap: to think is to think yourself free. To think and to think well was not the prerogative of the Nazi murderers any more than it was of their victims. The theoretical nature of her approach to the destruction of European

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THE BIG BU$INE$$ READER

Introduction by Ralph Nader
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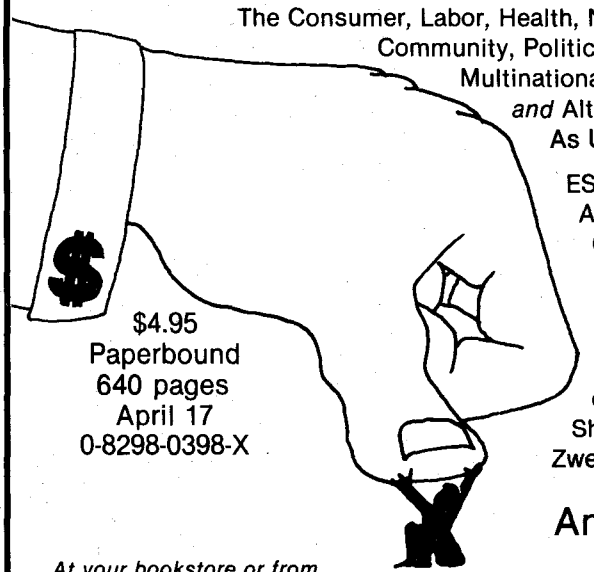

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Jewry was in contrast to the passion with which she described the terrible events themselves.

When I first read *Eichmann in Jerusalem* I was overwhelmed by the power with which Arendt reported the court testimony and the mountain of records which the Nazis themselves left of their crimes. I remember in particular her account of one Private Schmidt, who alone on the Eastern front seems to have asserted his conscience as a Christian and refused to kill; he was beheaded. I did not understand the "banality of evil" thesis, and in view of the facts, wondered whether she altogether understood what such a phrase implies. Her gift as a writer was indeed superior to her philosophizing about what Churchill called the worst episode in human history. Her lifelong refrain, we must think what we are doing, applied to Eichmann and his murder squads, simply meant: they were too ignorant, coarse, bureaucratic—in a word, unthinking. Therefore the extermination of even a million children could seem "banal," like a computer error.

So we are led back to that fatal discrepancy between German intellectuals and political beastliness. I do not know how much her gratitude for America included the recognition that her admired John Adams was in politics all his life, or that the noble Jefferson, our Goethe, was not ashamed to play the political game. His only regret, and ours, is that inferior men played it more successfully.

Can we always think what we are doing? No. But can we do what we have been thinking? William James said we should. So did Emerson, Thoreau, John Quincy Adams, and Lincoln before him. By now pragmatism has an ugly sound, and in the hands of many an American totally absorbed by the commercial culture, it should. It may be that by now Americans are too far removed from the Enlightenment even to vote for the Bill of Rights. The idea of a republic, of republican liberty, thrilled Hannah Arendt and made her passionate about her citizenship. She quoted the great German historian of antiquity, Theodore Mommsen—"My great dream was to live in a free German republic; lacking that, I wrote the history of Rome." Perhaps in the end she was too impatient with her old German political frustration, but too devoted to German intellectual *virtu*, to accept the mediocrity that so many of us now do accept in the face of a commercial rapacity that invades every side of American life.

She did not accept mediocrity; she did not really understand it. When the great Jewish scholar Gershom Scholem, an old friend, reproached her for not sufficiently loving the Jewish people, she tartly responded that the expression was nonsense, one could love God, not a people. The austerity of this is breathless. It is positively unthinkable among American intellectuals just now. Even to recall a perception like this is to remember how different the European writers in exile could be.

The Forbidden Experiment: The Story of the Wild Boy of Aveyron by Roger Shattuck

(Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $10.95)

Who is a person and who is not has always been a troubling question. It took a papal bull to make American Indians such for European missionaries in the 16th century, and in the 18th Rousseau wondered whether orangutans were but unspoiled men too clever to talk lest someone put them to work. More recently, the multiplication of hard cases—chess-playing computers, gesturing chimpanzees, autistic children, Australopithicene fossils, and various sorts of Martian imaginings—have rendered the question even more delicate. Now that *cogito* seems to come in kinds, what counts as one of us?

Framing the question this way—in terms of acceptance or rejection of fellowship rather than sameness or difference of subjectivity—reflects in itself an altered view of the matter over that of the classic epistemologists of the 17th and 18th centuries. Where they looked for the requisites of reason, what it is that makes thinking possible, and found it in an inner reality, mind, we

"Let us sing to Apollo." —Flaubert

The Letters of Gustave Flaubert, 1830-1857

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look for the requisites of sociality, what it is that makes intimacy possible, and find it in a public process, communication. It is the great virtue of Roger Shattuck's ruminative, almost dreamy account of the capture, treatment, and fate of Victor, the famous "wild boy of Aveyron," that it portrays this sea change in the criteria of humanness in the very act of happening.

Victor was captured, aged about 12, in the woods of southern France in January 1800. How long he had been in the woods, how he had arrived there, and how he had lived as a solitary were unclear, and remain so today. But what happened to him over the next decade as, a celebrity in spite of himself, he was projected into a series of intense social encounters designed to make a proper human being of him is extraordinarily well documented. After a month in a country orphanage he was more lucky to survive than the wilds, he was moved to a school in the district capital run by an intellectual priest who had studied a bit of zoology in pre-revolutionary Paris until the Terror drove him home. Six months later, having come to the attention of some of the leading savants of the age—the anthropologist Virey, the psychologist Pinel, the anatomist Cuvier, the educator Sicard—as well as to that of Napoleon's brother, then minister of the interior, he was brought to the Institute for Deaf-Mutes in Paris by the Society of the Observers of Man, where he came under the systematic supervision of a young medical student interested to prove through him the empiricist theory of mind. After five years the experiment was abandoned, and he lived on, obscure once more, cared for at the expense of the state by a widow in a little house near the Institute until his death from unknown causes in 1828. A short life and a riddling one.

The persons Victor encountered in his transit through some of the more high-minded institutions of Napoleonic France were a remarkably varied lot. Clair, a peasant gardener at the local school, "filled the multiple roles of jailer, foster parent, servant and tutor," spending nearly all day and night with him and "[talking] to him as people talk to a baby or an animal." (When the boy, who was of course mute and remained that way, was taken to Paris, the old man, who knew what intellectuals were like, said that if, when they were done with him, he needed a home he would take him back.) Bonneterre, the scientist *manqué* cleric, observed him as he would any other "interesting creature" that might have wandered into his garden from the woods and concluded, "there is no connection between his soul or mind and his body. . . . He has no discernment, no real mind, no memory." Virey, an armchair searcher after *l'homme nu*, had just finished a book, *Natural History of the Human Species*, "with detailed discussions of monkeys, Eskimos, Hottentots, Indians and other 'savages'" he had never seen, and turned to Victor as a prize case near to hand. But he found him a disappointment: "I'm sorry to see the natural man so egotistical. . . . Except for his human face, what would

the Wild Boy of Aveyron

distinguish him from a monkey?" Pinel, whom Shattuck calls "a founder of psychiatry and a pioneer in clinical medicine," but who sounds more like M. Homais, notes that the boy is "totally insensitive to music," asks "is there any reason not to say that in this area even elephants have an advantage over him?" and recommends he be put away like other defectives—deaf-mutes, albinos, and epileptics. As for the redoubtable widow, Madame Guérin (her husband was actually still alive when Victor first came to her and she had adult children who visited regularly), she wrote nothing about him and made nothing out of him. She merely cared for him as one of her own, less clever than the others, *le pauvre*, but no less valuable, for 27 years. It seems never to have entered her mind that there was any other way to treat him.

But the most consequential of the odd persons this odd person encountered, as well as perhaps the oddest, was the medical student: Jean-Marc Gispard Itard. Itard, appointed a resident physician at the Institute for Deaf-Mutes to work with the boy, was something of a solitary himself. Born in an Alpine village, he never married, did not go about in society, and devoted himself to medical research with monkish zeal. He started off like Bonneterre, Virey, or Pinel, an observer looking for a mind; he ended up, like Clair or Mme. Guérin, a soul responding to a soul—though, unlike them, he turned away.

Itard's view was that, rather than a monkey or an imbecile, Victor was a Condillac statue. He had a mind, and an intact one, but it was unstimulated, dormant—a *tabula rasa* on which, fortunately for science, unfortunately for him, hardly anything had yet been written. It could be brought to life, and he to humanity, by exposure to appropriate sensations, and Itard's ingenuity in providing such was endless. He took the boy on outings and to salons, he shocked him with a Leyden jar, he introduced him to the sensory complexities of mirrors, hot baths, and the shell game; he taught him to mutter a few half-words, to associate drawings and objects, and to construct simple tools; and he suspended him halfway out of a fifth floor window to cure him of tantrums. But the outcome was equivocal at best. "Your Excellency," he wrote to the minister of the interior upon giving up his efforts, "without formal orders from you to draft a report, I would have buried my undertaking in silence and oblivion. Its final result offers less the story of the pupil's progress than the story of the teacher's failure."

This, however, was only half the story, both of the progress and the failure. For as the "experiment" developed it became less an effort of one mind to bring another to life and demonstrate their inner identity and more a struggle of two men to construct a relationship that could mediate their outward difference.

When the boy is drawn back from the terrifying window, covered with sweat, Itard has him perform the cutout matching test he has been rebelling against and he goes through it all, "slowly it is true, and not too well, but without impatience." Then he throws himself on his bed and weeps: "This is the first time . . . Victor had ever cried." When Itard takes the boy to Madame Recamier's salon, he wolfs his food, flees the table, tears off his clothes, and installs himself in a tree, from which Itard, employing "all the means he [knows]," cannot coax him. Another practical gardener gets him down by offering him peaches, he is "covered up . . . as well as possible in a little dress

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belonging to the gardener's niece," and Itard never ventures into society with him again. When Mme. Guérin's husband dies, Victor sets the monsieur's place as usual, bringing a flood of grief from her. Unbidden, he removes the setting, puts everything back in the cupboard, and never sets the place again.

But the real crisis, and the real failure, comes with sex; at puberty "our young savage" is "consumed by continuous and violent desires without the faintest idea of their object." Itard brings him into contact with young women. He chooses one, he squeezes her hands, arms, knees, his "unruly desires grow stronger instead of disappear," and then, "seeing no way out of his uncomfortable emotion," he pushes her angrily away and turns to another to repeat the process. With one he goes so far as to walk her around, offer his cheek for a caress, and then throw himself on her shoulders clutching her tightly by the neck. But then, as she too does not respond, he thrusts her "spitefully" away. Itard is cast down—"Such was the critical period of puberty that had promised so much." "I shall not hide the fact that I was mistaken to expect puberty to develop [normally] in Victor." "I resigned myself . . . to watching my hopes fade away before an unforeseen obstacle." And he ends the experiment and the relationship, and largely disappears from Victor's life.

And Victor from his, which may have been a deeper business than Itard admits:

> All the things Madame Guérin does for him he can appreciate right away; he cannot see the usefulness of the things I am doing for him. . . . Yet at times I too am welcome. They are the times I have never used for any kind of instruction. If . . . I go to his room . . . when he has just gone to bed, his first movement is to sit up so that I can hug him. . . . Then he . . . takes my hand, places it over his eyes, on his forehead, on the back of his head, and holds it with his own . . . a long while. Other times he . . . places himself opposite me where he can caress my knees in his special way. He squeezes them and rubs them hard for several minutes in all directions, and sometimes touches them with his lips two or three times. People can say what they want, but I admit that I go along with all this childishness and don't interfere.

If Shattuck's sensitive, balanced, and reflective study fails, too, to bring the Wild Boy in from "the outer edges of humanity" where he existed "in a state of . . . moral weightlessness," well then perhaps we are none of us, saving perhaps the Clairs and Mme. Guérins of this world, up to it. And he does, anyway, bring exactly before us what was before Itard—the unnerving claim of Victor's human face.

Clifford Geertz

Clifford Geertz, professor at the Institute for Advanced Study, is author, with Hildred Geertz and Lawrence Rosen, of *Meaning and Order in Moroccan Society* (Cambridge University Press).

The Zero-Sum Society: Distribution and the Possibilities for Economic Change by Lester C. Thurow

(Basic Books; $12.95)

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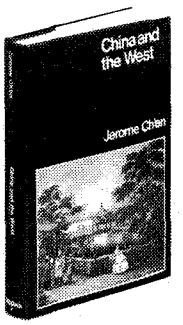

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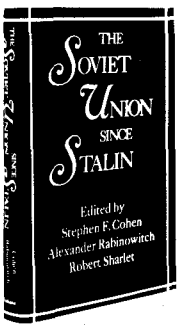

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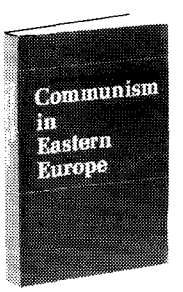

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planners possess all the technical tools for implementing whatever form of recovery the political system might settle upon. American politics, however, is no longer capable of generating rational economic policy either on behalf of the general public or even, as has been the norm all too frequently in Washington, on behalf of business elites. "Our problems arise," Thurow concludes, "because, in a very real sense, we do not have political parties. . . . Each elected official is his own party and is free to establish his own party platform."

Why this manifest political disarray? Thurow's answer has two parts. The first can be gleaned from his title: we live in a zero-sum society, in which every proposed economic policy offers benefits to some groups while imposing costs on others. Thurow is at constant pains to attack the shibboleth that economic policy can serve the "public interest" by affecting all groups and factions with magnanimous neutrality. If the growth rate is too low, more money must be channeled into investment. But will it come from the pockets of consumers, the paychecks of workers, or the dividends of stockholders? And when the returns from this investment begin to pour in, whose pockets will they line? That is just one example. In general, every proposed solution to the major economic problems facing the United States—inflation, unemployment, slow growth, low productivity, failing energy sources, environmental decay, economic discrimination, and inequality—involves massive distributional consequences. The political system, Thurow suggests, is incapable of dealing with these consequences.

The second part of Thurow's explanation of political disarray is important, insightful, and distinguishes his analysis from most others. A quotation is in order:

> In the past, political and economic power was distributed in such a way that substantial economic losses could be imposed on parts of the population. . . . Economic losses were allocated to particular powerless groups rather than spread across the population. These groups are no longer willing to accept losses and are able to raise substantially the costs for those who wish to impose losses upon them.

The list of such groups includes blacks and other minorities, workers, women, and consumers. In the meantime, the traditionally powerful business interests have not folded under this popular upsurge, but themselves hold effective veto power over social policies that might be adverse to their interests. The result is political standoff.

This standoff is the second sense in which America is a "zero-sum society": the political system embraces a multiplicity of vectors of force, each one of great power, but the sum of them is zero—we remain dead center. There are many viable energy strategies, but we settle on none. There are several effective means of treating inflation, but we implement none. There is a multiplicity of possible policies toward improving productivity and the rate of economic growth, but each is opposed by a group strong enough to prevent its implementation. Behind the visible appearance of political disarray and the failure of economic policy lies the clash of irreconcilable economic interests.

Lester Thurow

Thurow's is a testable scientific hypothesis. It offers two general predictions, neither of which is obvious. First, if the political power of previously powerless groups has increased, this ought to be reflected in a marked improvement in their economic position vis-à-vis traditional business elites, at least up to the crisis of the 1970s. Second, if Thurow's zero-sum hypothesis is correct, there should have appeared, through the inflation, recession, energy, and other crises of the past decade, no essential change in the distribution of income and wealth.

Unlike most grand theories of this type, Thurow's stands up well to the evidence, and *The Zero-Sum Society* presents much of the evidence with admirable clarity. The overall distribution of after-tax income has moved toward more equality in the past few decades, and has not deteriorated over the current crisis. This may be surprising to many who believe inflation and unemployment to be severely damaging to the poor, the elderly, and unorganized workers. In fact, whatever such tendencies there may be have been offset—as Thurow would predict—by increased welfare, old-age assistance, and other social benefits. Indeed, the composition of the social budget has shifted dramatically in the liberal direction since the end of World War II. The share of military expenditure in this budget has been cut in half, and health, education, and welfare expenditures have grown. According to calculations undertaken by Samuel Bowles and me, public consumption has grown to about 25 percent of the average working family's consumption. In addition, occupational safety and health regulations and environmental standards have cut sharply into the before-tax profits of corporations.

The only point on which Thurow's case is weak is his assertion that the economic position of minorities and women has not deteriorated through the crisis of the 1970s. His argument here is sketchy and contradicts much additional evidence from census and other reliable sources. These sources indicate a real deterioration in the economic position of blacks since the height of the Civil Rights movement, and no substantive improvement in the economic position of women at least since World War II.

Thurow's depiction of the multitude of arrows of political force involved in the current standoff—environmentalists, the poor, minorities, women, consumers, workers—is thus much more pluralistic than I believe warranted by the facts. As Galbraith suggested in his mid-1950s analysis of "countervailing powers" in American economic life, the main economic actors are capital and labor, with government mediating. That labor now operates mainly through the ballot box rather than the bargaining table does not substantially change this assessment. If there is a standoff, we would expect it to be between the worker-consumer-voter and the corporate establishment.

The evidence for such a standoff is dramatic; both sides have managed to protect themselves. Let me cite two pieces of it. First, the political clout of business is shown by the fact that the before-tax rate of profit has declined irregularly to about half its post-World War II level, while changes in corporate

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tax laws—a decline in tax rates, accelerated depreciation, depletion allowances, and investment credits—have acted to support the after-tax profit rate at a virtually constant level. Second, the increased power of labor is dramatized by the fact that the average rate of unemployment over the current period of depressed growth is almost half that of previous similar periods, such as the turn of the century and the 1930s. In addition, the effect of unemployment on the levels of wages is significantly less than in previous periods. In effect, workers, by which I mean the vast majority of American citizens, have so strengthened their position in affecting social policy as to prevent the effects of economic stagnation from falling upon their shoulders.

Nowhere is this situation brought out more clearly than in Thurow's perceptive analysis of inflation. There are two traditional theories of inflation, graphically described as cost-push and demand-pull. Cost-push inflation occurs when there is an exogenous increase in the cost of some input into production. The two prime candidates for cost-push inflation are labor and energy. Energy costs have risen, but this accounts for only a small portion of the observed rate of inflation. Labor costs have risen, but only in response to increases in the cost of living, and the wage share in national income, including social benefits, has not risen enough to account for most of the price inflation. Thus cost-push is not a viable theory of the current inflationary spiral.

Demand-pull inflation occurs when consumers, investors, and the government increase their spending, thus forcing up prices. The current United States inflation began as a demand-pull, when Lyndon Johnson demurred at financing the increasingly unpopular Vietnam involvement through tax surcharges, thus adding war-related demand to a constant level of private demand. The result was significant pressure on prices.

Beyond the end of the war, however, the demand-pull theory of inflation runs into trouble. As monetary conservatives are wont to emphasize, demand-pull inflation can occur only in the context of a federally condoned expansion of the money supply. This expansion has been condoned quite consistently, despite the conservative philosophy of Arthur Burns and his Federal Reserve colleagues. Why this fiscal laxity? Clearly because of the political implication of massive unemployment. Workers have the economic power to maintain their wage positions, and the political power to avoid the unemployment that high wages induce in the absence of governmental intervention. Once again Thurow's zero-sum argument, together with his assessment of the increased economic influence of the "traditionally powerless," explains a thorny economic conundrum. Of course Thurow's conclusions apply to earlier conditions of single-digit inflation. Whether they stand up in the face of today's double-digit levels remains to be seen.

In sum, the current inflation arises from no group being willing to bear the burdens of increased costs, and each being sufficiently powerful to avoid doing so. As Thurow says,

> To stop inflation in the presence of upward price shocks, such as energy, governments must adopt policies that lower someone's income. The problem is not finding economic policies that will lower incomes, but being able to impose them.

This is heady material for traditional economics, which takes pride in the distance of its theories from the grubby world of politics. But it is accurate nonetheless, and the failure of the economics profession to face this fact accounts in no small measure for its current public disfavor.

The essential fact is that a capitalist economy cannot operate within the context of a standoff between business and labor. For as Thurow notes, such a standoff gravely prolongs recessions by preventing economic downturn from performing its allotted function within the dynamics of economic growth. Historically, economic downturn has forced the business community to clean up its act. Weak firms and industries are eliminated, and backward technology is junked. The basis for a new round of investment and employment is laid by placing much of the burden of recession on the poor and the unemployed, freeing up funds and resources for another round of growth. An increase in the power of labor, and collusion of business and labor to maintain sick industries, freeze the economy in its depressed state. Whence the current predicament.

I shall avoid the temptation to dwell at length upon the many ramifications of this situation, which Thurow incisively explores in *The Zero-Sum Society*. Suffice it to say, this is an important book and should be explored by every reader of *The New Republic*. Rather, I shall move on to discuss Thurow's policy conclusions.

If there is a birth of social democratic politics in the United States in the coming decade, and there well might be, Thurow is the logical candidate for its economic guru. At once idealistic and pragmatic, academic and commonsensical, he inspires trust for his candor, and respect for his command of traditional economics. And indeed, his economic program sounds like a political platform: emphasis on environmental quality, full integration of women and minorities into the economy on the basis of equality, increased social welfare expenditures, reliance on market allocation with its adverse distributional impact tempered by government redistribution, a more progressive system of taxation, guaranteed jobs for all, and an insured minimum standard of living.

However, Thurow's proposal for crisis resolution does not seem to be in line with his analysis of the origins of the crisis. If our current dismal economic performance is political in origin, then it must require a political rather than a purely economic solution. If all social policies have winners and losers, we must pose the question: who gains and who loses from his platform? The winners are clearly minorities, the poor, women, the elderly, the majority of workers, as well as the middle classes

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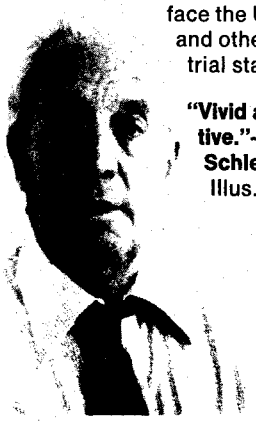

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and professionals who extend the social services for which his program provides. Who loses? Only business and those who have ethical scruples about social equality. Thurow provides us with no reasons for believing his solutions are in any way compatible with the interests of profits and corporate power—nor could he, given his position on the zero-sum nature of economic policy options.

The issue Thurow does not address, then, is precisely the most critical: how is business likely to react to the type of coalition he suggests, and how would its reaction affect the course of American economic development? One prerequisite for the viability of his program seems clear: it cannot lower the after-tax profit rate. For if domestic profits were to fall below general international levels, the upshot would not be the impoverishment of domestic coupon-clippers, but the flight of capital abroad. Yet at least two aspects of his scheme threaten significantly to reduce the power of business and have an adverse impact upon the profit rate.

First, the role of government in Thurow's conception is not unlike that played by those European nations now faced with the specter of Eurocommunism. Indeed, the economic agendas instituted in France, Italy, and, to a lesser extent, Germany following World War II are similar to those now proposed by Thurow. While these agendas did lay the basis for two decades of vigorous growth, the logical culmination of vesting such considerable economic powers in an electorate consisting largely of wage and salary workers is seen in the present strength of democratic socialism. American business is not likely willingly to undertake such a social experiment, and not being faced with the formidable task of postwar recovery, will not be so eager to acceed to popular demands. An indication of this mood at the pinnacle of the corporate order is the new conservative initiative of such groups as the Business Round Table and the American Enterprise Institute, whose economic philosophy runs directly counter to the form of welfare-state liberalism which has maintained domestic peace since the Korean War.

But even if Thurow's social democratic agenda succeeds in framing social programs that allow for an adequate level of profits, a second aspect of this agenda renders it unlikely to be carried out in practice. In brief, Thurow proposes to guarantee employment for all, and to eliminate the secondary labor markets and types of marginal employment now populated by women, minorities, and other low-wage laborers. But there is good evidence that this reserve army of deprived workers serves the critical economic function of maintaining labor discipline in primary labor sectors, by rendering the employer's power to hire and fire an effective means of industrial control. Certainly in periods of tight labor markets there is a strong tendency for the wage share to rise and the profit rate to fall accordingly. The current experience of Great Britain dramatizes the problem of controlling labor once a certain modicum of job security is guaranteed.

I do not mean to suggest that these objections to Thurow's economic agenda are definitive. They are not. The contrasting patterns of business/labor relations in Japan, France, Germany, and Sweden should caution us against casual generalization. However, if Thurow's analysis of the political roots of our current economic doldrums receives the attention it deserves, an equally penetrating analysis of the political alternatives facing us, along with their implications for economic policy, will remain to be offered.

Herbert Gintis

Herbert Gintis is professor of economics at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

Such a Pretty Face: Being Fat in America by Marcia Millman

(W. W. Norton; $10.95)

Years ago at a college dance, a young man meaning no harm compared me to a Rubens when I longed to be a Modigliani. My Rubenesque qualities were a source of misery. I concealed them under a loose, green raincoat which I wore everywhere. Unprotected and vulnerable without it, I cowered in a corner, invited to dance by no one but this single admirer with his odd, out-of-date taste in women.

I recalled this incident when reading Marcia Millman's book on being fat in America. I weighed about 140 pounds at the time. "You're not *really* fat," my friends assured me, reinforcing by that damning emphasis my conviction that I wasn't *really* acceptable either. Actually, I am not and never was obese. I've had (from birth, I think) 15 extra pounds encircling my middle and it's been my life's work to unearth my waistline. Men may come and go, children grow up, and friends move away, but my flab remains immutable. To lose it, I've popped nerve-jolting amphetamines, cut out carbohydrates, drunk gallons of water daily, jogged, steamed, and sauna'd myself to near unconsciousness. But no use.

A similar obsession with weight is shared by my friends, though they vary in shape. In fact, everyone I know is working off at least five unwanted pounds. This fixation is probably ingrained in the national character. Four out of 10 of us are overweight, yet despite our struggle with excess flesh (or, perhaps, because of it) fat people arouse in us "horror, contempt, morbid fascination, shame and moral outrage." This book is about the ways in which fat people in America suffer, the women more than the men. (The author contends that men experience obesity differently because their identity is less bound up in their appearance.) Though Millman makes a compassionate plea for a better understanding of the problems of extreme overweight, her real point is that a society whose highest standard of feminine beauty is an anorexic 21-year-old makes victims of us all.

A crucial relationship exists between weight and self-esteem. Fat children are wounded early in life, not just by the cruel comments of other children, but by their parents' embarrassment and repugnance as well. The child incorporates this judgment and makes it her own. This process continues in adolescence when the fat teenage girl is disqualified as a sexual being and commonly assumes the role of chaperone or confidante. One woman Millman interviewed, recalling this

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humiliating desexualization, described herself as a "fat duenna" who departed "like a blimp in a steady wind" when one of her friends was approached by a boy. By the time they are adults, many fat women have abandoned all efforts to look attractive. Shopping, one explained, is an ordeal: "I always felt, when I went into some boutique, that all the sales girls were staring at me and snickering, knowing that nothing in the store would fit me." I know how it feels to dash in and out of stores, avoiding three-way-mirrors (a common ploy) to buy whatever I can button. Instructed at an early age to choose "flattering" colors (i.e.: black or brown), at 15 I dressed like a Sicilian widow. Even when my weight is down, I'm drawn by force of habit to colors as murky as a clogged fish tank. The message is fat isn't pretty or sexy, so fat women shouldn't bother to try.

As sexual creatures, fat women are variously and wrongly accused of maladjustment ranging from man-hating to asexuality. One woman believes her obesity signals sexual deprivation: "I always thought that people knew the reason I was fat was because I didn't have a man . . . that I was home masturbating with my box of cookies." Another, that she appears sexually insatiable: "Being fat meant that I had uncontrollable desires, that I was voracious. It was a clear danger sign to men: stay away, this woman will eat you up." Some accept the fact of their social undesirability and withdraw; others who seek relationships may have to settle for men (fat admirers) who are attracted only to large women. Of these men one comments: "I think a man who would go to a dance looking only for a fat woman is deranged. I only want to have something to do with a man who likes me regardless of my size." There is no reason to assume that fat women are more disturbed in their sexuality than women who wear glasses or have curly hair. Actually, in matters of sexuality, who among us will throw the first stone? More likely they retreat from painful social situations and develop problems which would not arise in a more tolerant society.

Millman wisely refrains from offering pat reasons for why people gain weight. She suggests a variety: economics, for one. There are many more poor overweight Americans than affluent ones. Ethnic background counts too. Psychological explanations aside, there is probably no neurotic component to a pasta addiction acquired in childhood. Where psychological explanations apply, Millman offers some interesting ones: getting fat is not always a loss of control but a form of it; one may eat to defy a parent, to retreat from the sexuality of a father, and avoid competition with a still-needed mother.

Whatever the differences, common to all is a passion for food which, at times, obliterates everything else. In a grotesque game of Can You Top This, one woman confesses to driving 40 miles to a Dairy Queen for an early morning ice-cream cone, while another confides that she throws food into the garbage neatly wrapped in tin foil so it can be retrieved and eaten later. I understand this madness, having once plunged recklessly into the worst blizzard of the winter in search of a Cadbury chocolate bar. The tricks for consuming calories while pretending not to are many. One eats standing up, while reading, or when half-asleep. Food is gobbled furtively, in private. Even while on a binge, one vows to start a diet tomorrow and emerge from it miraculously transformed.

Millman devotes only one chapter, and that as an appendix, to men because she feels the question of weight is "less consequential and meaning-laden" for

How progressive plans become regressive policy.

David Rothman continues his provocative examination of the development of American penal and mental health institutions in this sequel to his award-winning study, *The Discovery of the Asylum.* Charles Rosenberg, Professor of Science and Medical History at the University of Pennsylvania, says, "The two volumes together will constitute one of the most influential and widely read historical studies of the past generation."

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them. Even when 200 pounds above normal, men report that their fat is not of particular consequence. Most of those interviewed were slim and athletic when young, coming by their girth later in life. As a result, they retain a slim self-image. If ridiculed, they threaten the heckler with a punch in the nose. They're the sort who thrust out steel-girded paunches, challenging you to go ahead and take a shot. They never have been fat boys; if they had, I'm convinced, their experiences would have been markedly similar to the women's. Millman hints that things are changing. If the proliferation of men's colognes and cosmetic preparations may be taken as an indication, then men are becoming increasingly preoccupied with appearance.

This book shows us how deeply fat women have been injured on account of their size, but in our society no one is spared. With our food increasingly sugar-saturated and our work increasingly sedentary, it's tough to keep slim, yet women will undertake a grueling regimen of deprivation for the sake of wearing a size eight. I suspect that inside every thin woman controlling her appetite is a fat one yearning to let go. One of the saddest comments Millman records was made by a woman of 60 who mused "I haven't done a damn thing in my life. I'm just a dumb old housewife. But then I thought, well, I've stayed thin and still look good in clothes." It's a punishing form of narcissism that we practice.

Sylvia Rabiner

Sylvia Rabiner is a New York writer.

The Return of Eva Peron by V. S. Naipaul

(Knopf; $10)

As enlightened people we are supposed to believe that all cultures are equidistant from eternity, that none is perfect, that each should be judged by standards that are immanent in the culture itself since no one, now, believes in universal standards. They are values, and values are culture-bound. Applied to an alien culture, they become forms of vanity. But this kind of moral inflation is hardly a danger for us. The danger for us is of a sort of inverse imperialism: the suppressing of our values out of cultural guilt and in the name of cultural relativity. Imperialism was intellectually sterile; belief in Western superiority ruled perception. But today, for many Western liberals, enlightenment has become sterile. Belief in Western guilt has made for an orthodoxy of vision.

Take the visitor to China. Mention liberty to him, ask about dissent or religious freedom, and he will say that these "bourgeois values" do not apply in China. It is different there. It is different in Cuba, too. In the 1960s, it was said to be different in North Vietnam. And today, for many liberals, it is different in other countries of the third world; some even speak of a fourth world, also different, where Western values do not apply. They come later, when they can be afforded, when there has been "development." One heard this about India during the Emergency, and one hears it about certain African countries today.

There is, I think, an element of self-deceit in this attitude. Painfully conscious of the despised roots of his own values in Christianity, capitalism, and industry, the liberal mutes his anger at the inequality, the despotism, and the climate of cruelty in many of the poor countries. He has a doctrine that they are the victims of Western imperialism, of Western finance, and he is afraid of blaming the victim. It is an understandable reaction, and if I have spoken of it too glibly, it was to mask how much I share it. And because I share it, V. S. Naipaul is for me an indispensable writer.

Born in Trinidad, descended from Indian grandparents, Naipaul does not carry our cultural burdens. He is obsessed with the corruptions of powerlessness, not of power. His great subject is the imperialism of Western moral styles and jargon in the poor countries. This mimicry of the West is both morally distasteful and historically inevitable to Naipaul. He writes about petty men with petty illusions, living in petty countries; and he writes about them fiercely: he seems a man who has fought too hard for lucidity to let sentimentality or guilt cloud *his* vision. In his fiction this absolute lucidity is offset by his sympathy for his characters, by his awareness of the avalanche of history that is bearing down on them (or that already has come crashing down elsewhere). But in his journalism, Naipaul's concern is with societies, and with these more abstract entities his caustic intelligence has full play.

Naipaul judges the societies he has written about—India, the West Indies, Spanish America, Zaire—not by the values of the West but on a tacit analogy to the human personality, a less parochial perspective. He uses words like identity, love, hate, integrity, and illusion to describe them. He uses the word authenticity, too, though with an ironic edge. And he uses "enemy" a good deal, where an American political writer would use "interest."

Balancing this personalist, almost existentialist, perspective is an idea of history: of how the sheer age of its civilization can weigh a country down; and of how, conversely, the absence of history can lead to a sense of national improvisation. To Naipaul, a people's politics reflects its history, its society, and its land. And the last is perhaps the most important: from his memories of Trinidad as well as from his family's memories of India, Naipaul knows how the size of a country, like the depth of its history, can shape personal and national character. In these essays he discusses a small land, Trinidad, and two immense and empty lands, Zaire and Argentina.

The Argentina piece, a grouping of several essays written between three and five years ago, may have been outstripped by events in this or that particular. But this affects neither its quality nor its pertinence, since Naipaul's subject is always national character, that which determines events. The essay opens in 1971, on the eve of Juan Peron's return, and Naipaul superbly recreates the climate of disillusion that led to his recall.

Naipaul's Argentina is a land of fear and fantasy, a country where politics consists of identifying one's enemies. "Almost everyone in Argentina now knows someone who has been arrested or tortured." Once so rich, so the Argentine legend goes, that the traveler on the pampa was free to slaughter any

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cow, eat only its tongue, and leave the rest to rot, Argentina is now poor. It lost its wealth in the chances of history: it tied its economy to the British Empire, upon which the sun has set. Now its currency is so inflated that even the rich cannot afford to leave, and "people take a second job and then a third." In 1971 a national crisis was averted when a laborer won the lottery. His win gave the illusion of hope. But as chaos continued to mount, the call went up for the "one man who seems able to alter history now as he altered it in the past. And he waits at the Iron Gate."

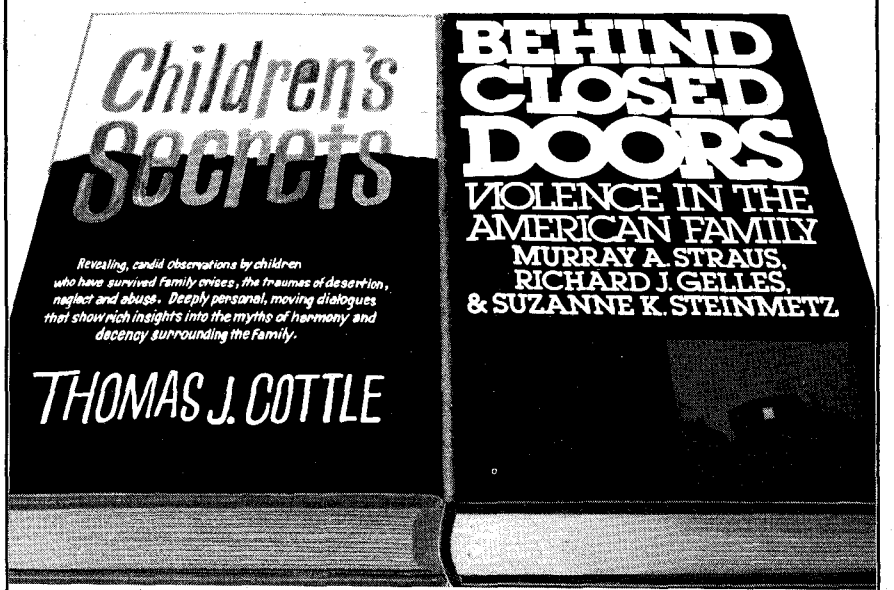
Thus introduced with Naipaul's inimitably dramatic touch, the Iron Gate is the Madrid suburb where Peron spent his long exile. Peron held power from 1945 to 1955, and then, 17 years later, regained it briefly in 1972. Naipaul's concern is with the secret of Peron's grip on Argentina. His inquiry is complex. It involves accounts of the 100 years of Argentine history stretching behind Peron, a story of plunder; of the country's rapidly improvised social fabric, "its half-made character"; and of the Argentine "macho," the embodiment of this ruthless land, who violates women with the same crude ferocity that his ancestors displayed against the Indians. Again and again Naipaul's search for the secret of Peron and Peronism comes back to that unlikely star of our stage, Eva Peron; the title of the essay, "The Return of Eva Peron," thus is enacted in its structure. Eva, the cabaret dancer who ruled with Peron until her death in 1952, and whose corpse, "expensively embalmed," Peron brought with him to the Iron Gate—Eva Peron is the patron saint of Peronism. She gave the movement its inspiration, and she named its cause. Naipaul says:

> In her ghosted autobiography *La Razon de Mi Vida*, Eva Peron says she found out about poverty when she was eleven. 'And the strange thing is that the existence of the poor did not cause me as much pain as the knowledge that at the same time there were people who were rich.' That pain about the rich—that pain about other people—remained the basis of the popular appeal of Peronism.

Eva identified the enemy, "so that even when the money ran out, Peronism could offer hate as hope." But neither she nor the movement could go beyond hate; there was no idea of reform. "Peronism was never a program. It was an insurrection." We think of ideology or nationalism as the driving forces of world politics, but Naipaul's somber essay draws our attention to something more elemental—hatred, that pain about other people, a little discussed but massively determining force in the international as well as domestic politics of the poor countries.

Hatred is also a theme in "Michael X and the Black Power Killings in Trinidad"—hatred of race, not of class. Born Michael de Freitas in Trinidad, Michael X, also known as Michael Abdul Malik, was "a Notting Hill pimp and gangster," who used the black power jargon to hustle money from the radical chic fringe of the British middle classes: "the people who keep up with revolution as with theatre, the revolutionaries who visit centers of revolution, but with return air tickets, the people for whom Malik's kind of Black Power was an exotic but safe brothel." Malik raised enough money—it was, after all, the late 1960s—to set up a commune back in Trinidad, where he, Hakim Jamal, "an American Black Power man," and several followers "did agriculture." (The mocking inflection of that last phrase is vintage Naipaul, as is the lighter, Fosterian irony of this: "There had been a meeting; someone had made a record.")

Front line reports on the family in crisis.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With appalled fascination, Naipaul follows the fortunes of the commune—actually a residential house with a garden in a suburban development. There is the public relations campaign, with a firm representing Sammy Davis Jr., to improve the image. There is the cadging letter to the Kuwait ambassador with its surefire applause line, "As you know, the biggest property owners in this country are Jews." There is the cachet conferred by a visit from John Lennon; and there is the incessant playing of the speeches of Stokely Carmichael. It was Jamal who supplied Malik with the American idea of black power, which fit Trinidad, with its 55 percent black population, and with its Asian and other minorities excluded from government, rather poorly. The radical chic fringe supplied the cash. And Malik, "the former ponce," a little man on a little island, fed on fantasies of world power.

It would be comic if it did not end in the murders of Gail Benson, Jamal's girl friend, and Joe Skerritt, an unlucky Trinidad youth. The essay's first sentence sets the right, ominous, tone, "A corner file is a three-sided file triangular in section, and it is used in Trinidad for sharpening cutlasses." It is a tone similar to that in Naipaul's 1975 novel *Guerrillas*—full of irony and menace—and Malik is clearly the model for Jimmy Ahmed, the malignly empty publicity guerrilla of the novel. There is no cant about the nonfiction novel in Naipaul, but without taking extravagant imaginative liberties, he establishes the character of Malik with the same care he used to create Jimmy. Using the novel Malik started to write as well as his unfinished autobiography ("This was a literary murder, if there ever was one"), Naipaul shows the fantasies of power and persecution that Malik had picked up from Jamal begin to rule Malik's mind. Jamal did the work of Eva Peron for Malik: he identified the enemy. White people were the enemy, people like Gail Benson. So Malik ordered her taken to a pit on the commune and killed, with a sharp cutlass, by the claque of frightened men who followed him.

The murder of Benson took place in December 1971. Joe Skerritt was killed two months later, by Malik. (Skerritt was black; his offense was not paying homage to Malik.) Jamal was killed in Boston in 1973 in a black power shootout. As for Malik—"a man led to lunacy by all the ideas he had been given of who he was"—he was hanged in Trinidad in May of 1975. It is Jonestown in a minor key, and as at Jonestown the tragedy lies in the slaughter of the followers. Stanley Abbott was a follower, a victim of Malik's lunacy, and the essay ends with a glimpse of him.

Abbott, Naipaul tells us, had to endure the "Calvary" of two murder trials: one for his part in the murder of Skerritt, the other for Benson. (He had held Benson while Malik's henchmen sliced at her with the cutlass; Malik had bullied him into it.) Stanley Abbott was loyal; that can be said of him. In London he had followed Malik, and when Malik set himself up in Trinidad and wrote him a one-word letter saying "Come," Abbott

drawing of V. S. Naipaul by David Schorr

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NO MEMORY OF DYING

These crows which circle the birch trees
make long and deep shadows on the hillside.
I imagine my own black bird fluttering inside me,
a furious shadow banging itself apart.
Then a breeze comes warm across the forest.
Nothing breaks in the mild weather.

Gary Zebrun

had come. Last April, after spending six years in a death cell, Stanley Abbott was hanged. "He never became known outside of Trinidad, this small, muscular man with the straight back, the soldierly demeanor, the very pale skin and the underslept, tormented eyes. He was not the X; he became nobody's cause; and by the time he was hanged, that caravan had gone by." The essays on Zaire and a personal essay on Conrad are variously interesting. But for its masterfully sustained irony as well as for its final chord of pathos, this Trinidad essay is the most powerful in the collection.

What is missing from Naipaul's journalism is a sense of the mixedness of life. To judge by Naipaul, nobody laughs or smiles or tells the truth in Argentina; and nobody challenges, much less laughs at, his gloomy views, either. Obsessions are clearly at work here, eliminating discrepant data from consideration. Naipaul may be free of liberal guilt, but clearly he has hang-ups of his own. Where do his obsessions end, and where does Argentina begin? E. M. Foster said of Henry James that most of life had to disappear "before Mr. James can do us a novel," and the same might be said of Naipaul in his journalism. For when one compares his two books on India to Louis Malle's documentary film, or sets his sketch of Borges as a myth-besotted, slightly craven Argentine next to the admiring portrait produced by Paul Theroux, another recent visitor to Argentina, one begins to wonder whether the intensity of his prose and the singlemindedness of his vision do not come at the expense of representativeness. It is hard to separate the power of his work from the truth of it. The spell he casts may be stronger than the light he throws. Still, it is an unforgettable spell, and who can doubt that it reveals a face of truth?

Jack Beatty

Robin Winks on mysteries

Two of the most common themes for popular fiction today are terrorists and confrontation with the Russians. Anyone who doubts that "the common reader"—a notably useless term—takes his foreign policy analysis more from fiction than from the *New York Times* ought to spend a bit of time wallowing in some these excessive, high spirited, utterly unlikely examples of political pornography before turning to ponderous surveys by the sociologists who purport to chart public opinion. Of course such books aren't all bad, and some few are even well written, and every now and then one of them asks the right questions.

One such book is *First Strike*, by Douglas Terman (Scribner's; $10.95). It begins well, as we see two perfectly human and likable Russians at Zhignask discussing the technical problems of imitating a US Navy warhead. And it moves along steadily, accumulating credibility, as the KGB seeks to use a detente-prone US senator (who hopes to run for president on a peace platform) to expose the United States to Russia's first-strike capability. The action moves back and forth, from the Soviet Union to North America, until the prime Russian agent in the matter comes to the West Indies to complete the wooing of the senator during his holiday. The senator's private pilot, Brian Loss, a battered escapee from the war in Vietnam, and his unconventional girl friend see what is happening to the senator, though they do not know of the rest of the plot. A parallel strand of activity taking place in Puget Sound is slowly drawn into the main skein, and the whole becomes a single taut fabric as Loss finds himself under suspicion for theft and murder. The book is carefully calculated to warn us against doves in high office, against any notion that the Russians can be trusted, and that while the Chinese may be on our side these days we shouldn't count on them.

First Strike is interesting on several counts other than its mirror image of today's paranoia, nicely picked up by Scribner's in full-page ads in the *Times* (the publisher obviously believing that intelligent people do read such books, just as I've suspected all along). The author clearly knows airplanes, boats, the sea, and the locales of which he writes, for there is a strong sense of authenticity, of grasp, about the narrative. Except at the very last moment the book is resolutely tough-minded. And it appears to be a reincarnation, for it was previously published, as the copyright page says, "in substantially different form," as *The 3 Megaton Gamble*. This last raises a curious point, for a copy of *The 3 Megaton Gamble*, as published originally by the Vermont Crossroads Press for $5.95, a little over a year before the Scribner's version appeared, shows them to be in outline, and generally in mood, much the same book. To be sure, the Scribner's version is better written, and in the dust jacket photograph the author looks like Charles Bronson afloat on a rough sea while for the Crossroads Press he is clean-shaven and obviously a flyer. One wonders whether Terman rewrote his book, and if so why, or whether it was rewritten to his instructions and if so by whom, and in particular who advised the changed ending, which in *First Strike* is a conventionally happy cop-out while in *The 3 Megaton Gamble* (a bad title) flowed toughly and logically from the plot line. But the book is well worth reading in either version, and I presume only *First Strike* is in print.

Another concern catching the headlines is gay rights, and Joseph

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Hansen makes as good a case for seeing the gay lifestyle as entitled to its own privacies as any of the more shrill writers do. Hansen is the creator of a series figure, Dave Brandstetter, who is a homosexual and who works the seamy side of California (one sometimes wonders, from detective fiction, whether there is any other side) in his own tough and authentic way. The latest Hansen is *Skinflick* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston; $8.95), and while it is about the murder of a born-again Christian by, it appears, the owner of a porno shop, it is also about the ways in which people twist their moralities to meet their needs—scarcely a new theme, with few surprises, but well explored and intelligently handled. This is the fifth case of Dave Brandstetter, and for those unfamiliar with the series, an excellent place to start.

The book of the month (though this is no club), however, is *Castles Burning* by Arthur Lyons (Holt, Rinehart and Winston; $8.95). This is also a fifth book—perhaps it takes five laps these days to find one's stride in a crowded field—and not only Lyons's best but the most successful addition to the Hammett-Chandler-Ross Macdonald school I have read in several years. The tone, manner, style, and social concerns are so precisely those of Marlowe and Archer, one feels that Jacob Asch ("a Jewish detective working in and out of Los Angeles") has been cloned. This hardly sounds complimentary; still, in the end I mean it to be, for Lyons proves to have his own point of view, and a special toughness that Chandler often denied to himself. The plot is simple enough: Asch is asked to find a wife who deserted a now successful artist many years ago, learns that the son born of that marriage was killed in a car crash, and apparently precipitates the kidnapping of the ex-wife's stepson. The trailer camp and Rodeo Drive juxtaposition of life in southern California (and especially around Palm Springs) is nicely captured and the Neil Young song, invoked by the title, tells us quite a bit about teenage perceptions. If it weren't still chilly out, I would take Terman and Hansen to a hammock, but Lyons will keep you bolt upright.

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Correspondence, *from page 7*

the second place it ignores the fact that interest is a cost that permeates almost all businesses. Business concerns in the non-competitive area of the economy meet these added costs by raising prices. Others that are competitive, such as small businesses and farmers, are, because of these high interest rates, being forced out of business in large numbers. This reduces the supply of goods and services going to the market and is inflationary.

John C. Davis
Former Chief Economist
President's Council of Economic Advisors

Correction:

In his letter on the March 29 correspondence page, Stanley Hoffmann stated that France had built the world's third largest nuclear force, not the largest, as printed.

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Washington Diarist

Hype

Flight attendants on commercial airlines—who just three weeks ago thought all they had to contend with was a mysterious red rash that seemed to break out on Florida runs—are now the victims of another irritation. It seems that photographers from *Playboy* magazine, inspired by their enormously successful attempt to prove once and for all that Ivy League female undergraduates have breasts and (for a slightly higher fee) genitalia, have managed to lure a number of major US airlines' flight attendants into their studios. Spokespeople for the airlines whose members will be so unabashedly visible in the May issue maintain that they find this conduct unbecoming. "We just don't think that this is the kind of image we want the company to have or our flight attendants to have," an Eastern spokesman said. "Demeaning" and in "poor taste" were the words of a TWA spokesman. This might seem an admirable expression of industry concern were it not coming from the same industry that asked us not so long ago to "fly" Cheryl. The same people who spend millions of dollars advertising toothy white smiles, teach grooming techniques in flight school, and work hard to hang the scent of sexual accessibility on their female flight attendants' uniforms are now ostensibly upset because those uniforms have been shed (but left, tell-tale, in the picture). Are they afraid we'll discover deltas not ready when we are? Or that it'll slip exactly how one earns one's wings every day? It's ludicrously hypocritical for the airlines even to consider disciplinary action. They should just wait out this mystery-ending exposure. Besides, those attendants will be dressed again soon enough. The *Playboy* man's curiosity is insatiable but his attention span is short.

Have I simply missed seeing the ads, or have Dewar's Profiles bitten the ad-campaign dust? I pray for the latter but am content with the former. The last profile I saw was of 30-year-old Raisa Scriabine, who is fluent in five languages and whose most recent accomplishment was to help "negotiate an international Convention for the Conservation of Migratory Birds." (No doubt she's accomplished many more things since then.) Her favorite place is "the far side of any challenge." Her Scotch? Dewar's, of course. "Dewar's is definitely a philosopher's Scotch . . . a personal, reflective, Dostoevsky-reading drink." And of course Raisa is pictured in a library with an open book—though we can't tell if it's the Russian, French, German, English, or Spanish edition of *Crime and Punishment* thirsty-for-life Raisa is holding. If Dewar's actually has dropped these offensive profiles, now I can start praying for the demise of one other ad series: that *line-up* of long-haired *airheads* that I *guess* you could call "those *Cosmopolitan* girls."

How many of you have scurried to your dictionaries to check the etymology of the rubric at the top of this page? The number of books being published on the English language and the stream of magazine pieces on language-related subjects is astonishing (we've been spared any new semiological treatises by Roland Barthes). William Safire's weekly language columns in the *New York Times* bring him 10 times as much correspondence as his political writing. Am I the only one bored with it, and its recent ilk? Are we really so obsessed with linguistic intricacies? We who through lack of interest have let the formal teaching of grammar slip from school curricula? We who split infinitives with greater facility than a Cuisinart slices celery? The George Orwell of "Politics and the English Language" might be cheered by recent signs, because he believed that "silly words and expressions" can be eliminated by the "conscious action of a minority." But recent books and magazine pieces on language are aimed not at elimination but rather at proliferation—dozens of expressions and words whose origins we are only barely aware of are paraded before us in full etymological regalia. Rather than an expression of our concern for our most precious possession, this recent vocabular fanfare seems to me to be just another symptom of our tendency to escape into trivia: books of lists, books of official rules, Peter's and everybody else's principles. If people were speaking more eloquently or writing more effectively I'd think differently, but that doesn't seem to be the case, particularly among politicians, the group Orwell was chiefly addressing.

The American Book Awards, the beleaguered successor to the National Book Awards, limps along to its first annual awards ceremony at the Seventh Regiment Armory in New York on May 1. The latest incident involved the elimination of four of the five nominations for the "paperback autobiography" award because they had been published before this year (so Malcolm Cowley wins by default). TABA's problems began last year when they announced that there would be 33 award categories instead of the traditional seven and that the 11-member nominating committees would include publishing people in addition to writers and critics. Former NBA winners, prominent critics, and high-quality publisher Farrar, Straus & Giroux protested the new set-up, fearing that it would lead to awards based more on industry interest than literary merit. TABA asked its disparagers to wait until the list of nominations appeared before getting too upset. On March 20, that list was made public. Norman Mailer, Philip Roth, and William Styron, nominees for the fiction award, immediately asked to have their novels withdrawn from consideration. TABA doesn't want that: "Can these gentlemen really feel that the committee chose the wrong books?" It's silly to think that committees composed of two writers, three critics, two editor/publishers, two librarians, and two booksellers—all people who read and judge books all the time—would choose bad books, and they haven't. (Selection of winners is done by 2000 authors, critics, editors, booksellers, and librarians around the country.) If TABA seems to have as much interest in promoting books, constructive industry PR, and spreading its favors around within the industry as it does in selecting worthy books for its awards, so what? Categories for "book design" and the like are meant to recognize more talent within the industry, not to cheapen the more prestigious literary awards. Book publishing is commerce. As long as TABA doesn't choose bad books and doesn't neglect good ones, who's to gripe? Critics who still complain can always boycott and throw their energy into the "purer" awards forum they've had all along, the National Book Critics Circle Awards.

Marc Granetz

Marc Granetz is editor at New Republic Books.

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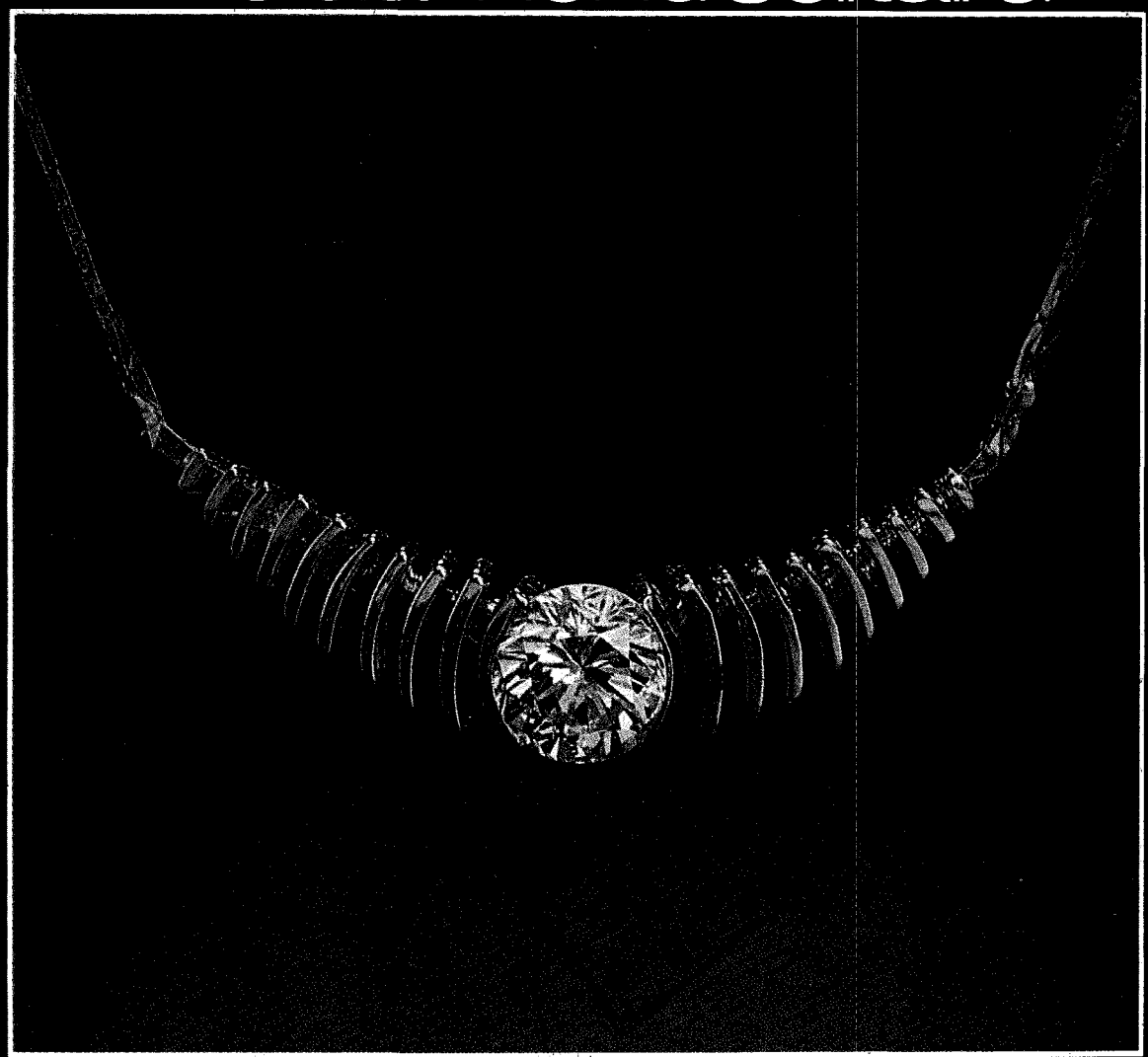

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